

Testimony of Jonathan Heath on behalf of Family Violence Project
In Support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence
March 19th, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representatives Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Jon Heath, I live in Vassalboro, Maine and I am writing on behalf of Family Violence Project serving Kennebec and Somerset Counties, to share why support for this critical funding is so important.

I have worked for the Family Violence Project, on behalf of domestic abuse survivors for 18 years. I became interested in this work and specifically working for the Family Violence Project because back in 1992, when I was just 22 years old, they helped a loved one of mine to escape from abuse. I remember thinking back then, that “these advocates are superheroes”, and so my life experience as a childhood survivor of domestic abuse, along with my introduction to advocacy for my loved one in 1992, led my career path to Family Violence Project in 2006.

Much of our work has changed since my first introduction to the Family Violence Project Advocate in 1992, and yet, much remains the same. The differences relate to technology and the impact it has had on survivors of domestic abuse, and dv stalking. Advocates have stayed informed so that we can effectively assist survivors who are dealing with the growing complexity of power & control strategies used against them. These strategies have not changed, they are universal, but their power to oppress is amplified by technology. At the same time, our work remains much the same as it did back in 1992. This relates to the needs of survivors, because all people have a need and a fundamental right to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, and while there is great effort required to do this work, bearing stories of survival day after day, there is also immense reward in working alongside brave survivors, as they carefully and courageously reclaim those liberties that abusive partners forcibly took from them.

Since Family Violence first opened its doors in 1978, our work has always focused on amplifying the voice of survivors, and the spirit of that work requires us to stand in support and often in the shadows. Survivors come to us, through our helplines, shelters, schools, and community outreach offices, often disempowered by abuse and they leave remembering how strong they are. We do not self-promote like small businesses and corporations do, sending the message that the consumer cannot do without their product, because it is so important for us to impute all success and strength onto survivors. A coercive controlling abusive partner strategically takes away liberty and replaces it with a lie that the survivor is less than, incapable of surviving without the abusive partner in their life dictating every move. We intentionally take no credit for a survivor’s liberation, because if we did, it would simply be more of the same message that the survivor has been hearing, that they are incapable of surviving on their own.

This proven strategy has empowered survivors since the beginning of our work, and it keeps us from seeking praise, and spotlight because survivors have earned and deserved all the credit for their liberation. Advocacy was never intended to be profitable; it is a service that could never be paid for by survivors in need. We do this for the intrinsic reward of helping survivors liberate their lives from domestic abuse, working tirelessly to support tax paying constituents in Kennebec and Somerset Counties and we desperately need your support.

Jonathan D. Heath
153 Holman Day Road, Vassalboro Maine
jheath@familyviolenceproject.org
207-242-9011