



Testimony of Pamela Morin on behalf of Family Violence Project
In Support of LD 210, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence
March 19, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Pam Morin, and I am writing on behalf of Family Violence Project to share why support for this critical funding is so important.

I am the Executive Director of the Family Violence Project, as well as a survivor of domestic violence. For 50 years, our mission has been to provide life-saving support and essential resources to individuals and families impacted by domestic violence in Somerset and Kennebec Counties. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony with an urgent request: to increase state funding for the essential work we do.

Family Violence Project is one of eight Regional Domestic Violence Resource Centers across Maine, and we are a lifeline to thousands of survivors each year. Since our founding in 1978, we have provided 24/7 helplines, individual and group advocacy, court support, shelter services, and much more. Our outreach offices in Skowhegan, Waterville, and Augusta, along with our emergency shelters and supportive housing units, provide survivors with the critical support they need to rebuild their lives and break free from the cycle of violence. We are dedicated to empowering survivors and helping them regain their independence, safety, and dignity.

Each year, we provide a wide range of services, including civil court advocacy, school- and community-based education, and support groups for survivors. Despite the growing need, we are facing an unsustainable situation. While the need in our community has not decreased, our costs have significantly increased year after year, and our state contract has been flat funded for six years.

In the last fiscal year alone, Family Violence Project served 2,219 unduplicated individuals and answered 3,087 calls to our helpline—a 33% increase from the previous year. This surge in demand underscores the growing need for our services. In 2024, our emergency shelter provided refuge to sixty-one individuals, including nineteen children, while 686 survivors received help and support navigating complicated legal processes critically needed for their safety. We facilitated support group sessions and organized 102 community awareness events aimed at educating and preventing domestic violence. Additionally, we reached 1,954 students through educational programs, these numbers highlight the critical role our organization plays in supporting survivors and fostering safer communities.

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, our funding has remained flat in recent years, while the costs for living wages and essential resources have risen significantly. In response, we have made difficult choices, including cutting staff, reducing services, and stretching every dollar. However, it has become clear that we cannot continue to meet the demand in our community without an increase in funding.

Again, this fiscal year, we had to address a budget deficit. As a result, we have been forced to reduce the number of advocates available for court accompaniment, a critical service for survivors navigating the complex legal system. We have also made the difficult decision not to fill vacant positions, one in our shelter and one in our outreach office, which means fewer staff members are available to provide one-on-one support to survivors. Over the past year, our team has been reduced by 16% or four full-time positions. Although we continue to work diligently to secure alternative funding, we are at a breaking point.

Our 24/7 helpline is a vital resource for survivors, and we are fortunate to still have some volunteers supporting it. However, the volunteer pool has dwindled, and the number of after-hour calls continues to rise, in both volume and complexity. As a result, our staff has been compelled to take on additional shifts, further stretching our already limited resources and their personal capacity to shoulder this difficult crisis work.

For every survivor who reaches out to us, there are many more who need help. With our current resources, we simply cannot meet the demand. If we do not receive the funding support we are requesting, we will be forced to make even more devastating cuts to our services, including the elimination of critical programs or reductions in our hours of operation. These cuts would be catastrophic, not only for our organization but for the survivors and community partners who depend on us.

An increase in state funding will enable the Family Violence Project to sustain essential services and restore positions we have cut to be able to help more survivors. It will ensure that no one seeking safety, support, or guidance will be turned away. We can do better for Maine's survivors, but we need your support to make that happen.

Domestic violence is a crisis that affects every member of our community. The survivors who reach out for help are always reaching out because they have an urgent need for that help, and they need a timely and effective response. There is always a cost when we are unable to provide it. The work we do is essential in breaking the cycle of violence and helping survivors reclaim their lives. I urge you to invest in Maine's families by increasing state funding for domestic violence resource centers like ours. Your decision will have a lasting impact, not just on the lives of the survivors we serve, but on the well-being and strength of our entire community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Pamela Morin

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agencies of Kennebec Valley