



P.O. Box 704
Portland, ME 04104
Phone: (207) 767-4952
Fax: (207) 767-8109
Email: info@throughtheseddoors.org
www.throughtheseddoors.org

Testimony of Rebecca Hobbs & Jenny Stasio on behalf of Through These Doors
In Support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
March 19, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyers, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, our names are Rebecca Hobbs and Jenny Stasio, Co-Executive Directors of Through These Doors, the domestic violence resource center in Cumberland County, and we are writing on behalf of our organization, in support of LD 875 and the need for funding for essential services for victims of domestic violence in Maine.

Through These Doors is one of Maine's network of regional domestic violence resource centers that provides critical, wrap-around services for survivors of domestic abuse and their children and essential support, training, and information for community response systems. Together, Maine's resource centers serve more than 12,000 people experiencing domestic abuse and violence every year statewide. Through These Doors also operates Cumberland County's certified violence intervention program men, called "A Different Choice".

Through These Doors has been providing holistic services for people experiencing domestic abuse since 1977. We serve over 20% of the individuals in Maine who reach out for domestic violence support and assistance. Given our large city center and proximity to more populous regions in New England, we are also serving a number of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers that is significant by Maine standards. Cumberland County also is the location of Maine's only prison and re-entry center for women in the state.

Through These Doors urges you to support LD 875 to invest resources for lifesaving services and to fulfill the state's commitment to victims of domestic abuse. We rely on MCEDV passthrough funding from the Maine Dept. of Health and Human Services for approximately half of our organization's budget. We rely on those funds to support our core services to survivors: advocacy on the helpline, in person at outreach sites and in court, and shelter services. Erosion of these funds is already having its effects. Flat funding, escalating costs, and increasing demand make it impossible for us to sustain our current levels of services, which already do not meet the full demand and need for both services and prevention programming.

All our costs continue to rise. Through These Doors prioritizes raising funds through other private and competitive federal and local grants, which helps to fill the gaps. But in the end, it is not enough. We have already made painful choices that include cuts in staffing, services, and financial assistance. Without additional resources, more cuts will be necessary.

Through These Doors suffered from significant employee turnover in the past two years, attributable to relatively low wages and emotionally taxing and demanding work, which includes shifts taking helpline calls on nights and weekends. The Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence estimates that the cost of staffing has increased by more than 30% statewide.



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In the past three years, TTD has needed to reduce effectively 5 staff positions, 15% of our workforce. The loss was not due to any one or two things, but a regular and consistent erosion of funds and support, due to increased costs and flat funding from the State contract. Specifically, Through These Doors has curtailed programs in the following ways:

- No regular in-person support group.
- Fewer advocates in our outreach offices in Portland and the Midcoast region.
- Fewer advocates to act on referrals from law enforcement.
- Fewer advocates in our emergency shelter, especially a reduction in after-hours shelter advocacy.
- Elimination of two full time youth educator positions, which has forced a pause on youth education work.
- A reduction and near elimination of all direct financial assistance to survivors of abuse.

Without an increase in funding to keep up with the costs of providing services, Through These Doors will have to reduce our capacity even further in the next fiscal year. Without the lifesaving services that Through These Doors provides, we will see more suffering and ultimately deaths in our communities. Annually, at least half of all homicides in Maine are domestic abuse homicides. From holding a seat on the Maine Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel, reviewing cases, and attending monthly meetings, we see ample evidence to suggest that the people killed by their abusive partners in Maine were by and large not working with advocates from Maine's resource centers. This is a question that we ask at each Panel meeting, and almost always the answer is 'no'. The safety planning that advocates do with people living in fear of their abusive partners is not only supporting survivors to be safe in a moment of crisis but also contributing to their long-term ongoing safety and stability and is saving lives all over Maine. Any cut in services will negatively affect those results.

Maine can do better for victims of domestic abuse. Please support LD 875 to ensure that critical domestic violence services remain available for survivors when they need us most. By doing so, you send a clear and consistent message that domestic violence has no home in our state and survivors of abuse deserve support.