



Cumberland County Violence Intervention Partnership

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Jennifer Annis, Project Manager

Testimony of Jennifer Annis Written testimony in support of L.D. 875 An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence

Date of Public Hearing: March 19, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Jennifer Annis. I am the Project Manager for the Violence Intervention Partnership (VIP), a division of the Cumberland County Public Health Department. I am providing written testimony on behalf of the Cumberland County Public Health Department in support of L.D. 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence.

VIP is Cumberland County's Coordinated Community Response to domestic and sexual abuse and is comprised of multidisciplinary community partners to include local domestic and sexual abuse providers, human trafficking providers, criminal and civil legal partners, representatives from elder abuse and child abuse agencies, medical providers, representatives from community organizations and more. Support for L.D. 875 is critical because Maine cannot afford to lose services that provide safety, support and healing to individuals and communities. Below are some of the reasons these services are essential.

Domestic violence is highly prevalent. Domestic violence affects over 12 million people a year.¹ Each year in Maine, about half of all homicides are related to domestic violence. In addition, Maine's domestic violence resource centers support more than 14,800 individuals in one year².

Domestic violence is a critical health issue that leads to adverse health consequences including both short-term and chronic health issues. Those who experience abuse are more likely to have chronic pain, headaches, gastrointestinal problems, post traumatic stress disorder and more³.

Domestic violence leads to adverse economic consequences. Victims experience a loss of productivity, wages, inability to attend work, and job loss due to the abuse.⁴

¹ Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

² Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence. "2024 Data Dashboard."

³ Jacquelyn C. Campbell, "Health Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence," The Lancet vol. 359, no. 9314 (2002): 1331–1336.

⁴ Ellen Ridley, John Riox, Kim C. Lim, DesiRae Mason, Kate F. Houghton, Faye Luppi, and Tracey Melody,

Total annual health care costs were higher for physically abused women, with the highest costs for ongoing abuse (42 percent higher compared with non-abused women)⁵

Children who witness abuse are negatively impacted. Children who witness domestic violence or are victims of abuse themselves are at serious risk for long-term physical and mental health problems.⁶ 18.3% of Maine middle schoolers report that violence or the threat of violence in their home has caused them to have to leave home, even if only temporarily.⁷

Domestic Violence Resource Centers work to reduce these impacts and increase safety for victims. In their own words, survivors report the importance of working with advocates:

"Every step of the way I have had support, whether through the 24/7 crisis line, meetings with my advocate, weekly support groups, or the physical presence of an advocate with me at every court appearance. They have all given invaluable supports that I would otherwise not be able to obtain on my own." -Survivor

"Through These Doors (Domestic Violence Resource Center) has been a lifeline. TTD gave me space and emotional support. It felt so dark before." -Survivor

"My only support has been (the advocates). I'd have given up if I didn't have this support." - Survivor

"I appreciate you guys being here. You offered me a lot more resources for my child and support for myself as well." - Survivor

"You (advocates) supported my daughter and I will always be grateful. Thank you for all the work you did." -Parent of survivor

"I am speechless and so grateful. You said you wouldn't quit and you didn't" -Survivor supported throughout the criminal legal process.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. Please support people who are experiencing domestic abuse by voting in favor of passing L.D. 875.

Domestic Violence Survivors at Work: How Perpetrators Impact Employment, (Augusta, ME: Maine Department of Labor and Family Crisis Services, 2005).

⁵ Bonomi AE, Anderson ML, Rivara FP, Thompson RS. Health care utilization and costs associated with physical and nonphysical-only intimate partner violence. *Health Serv Res.* 2009 Jun;44(3):1052-67. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6773.2009.00955.x. Epub 2009 Mar 17. PMID: 19674432; PMCID: PMC2699921.

⁶ Gilbert, L.K., Breiding, M.J., Merrick, M.T., Parks, S.E., Thompson, W.W., Dhingra, S.S., Ford, D.C. (2015). Childhood Adversity and Adult Chronic Disease: An update from ten states and the District of Columbia, 2010. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*; 48(3): 345-349.

⁷ 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. "Middle School Detailed Report."