



March 19th, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

I join you today on behalf of the Maine Women's Lobby. For over forty years, the Maine Women's Lobby has worked to build gender justice in Maine through legislative advocacy and systems change. We are here today in support of **LD875, "An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence"** and we thank Representative Meyer for sponsoring this important bill.

Domestic violence is a crisis in Maine communities, overwhelmingly affecting the health, safety, and security of women. In the most recent Maine Crime Victimization Report, "Nearly one in five (18%) of those who reported having experienced any type of crime in the previous 12 months reported that at least one crime was committed by a current or former domestic partner or family member." **And women experienced domestic violence crimes at ten times the rate of men.**¹

Links between experiencing violence, economic security, and the ability to access services and support systems are clear. Low-income Mainers and those without regular access to food and housing stability are more likely to experience sexual violence. Once they do, they face greater barriers in accessing services. [According to MCEDV](#), 98% of domestic violence resource center providers have worked with a survivor who didn't have reliable access to transportation. According to MCEDV's report on economic abuse, "abuse creates economic instability. And, in turn, economic instability reduces safety options for survivors and makes them more vulnerable to continued violence and isolation. The ability to access safety often hinges on access to economic resources, and while abuse can occur in any income bracket, people in poverty are nearly twice as likely to experience domestic violence."²

While the need for services and economic impact of these crimes are clear, what is less clear is how we ensure the sustainability of these systems. The need for services has increased notably in the last five years, but the number of service providers has dropped, as wages have remained stagnant and the funding landscape grows increasingly

¹ Murray, Dumont, and Shaler. (2022). Maine Crime Victimization Report: 2022. Cutler Institute of Health Policy. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/justice/43/>

² Maine Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (2019). Retrieved from https://www.mcedv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Economic-Abuse-Report_FINAL.pdf

precarious. Our partners at MCEDV report that in recent years, the cost of staffing has increased 30%, the need for services has increased as much as 44%. **Yet funding has remained level - threatening this essential infrastructure.**

Funding services that support victims and survivors of domestic violence is not only about supporting victims of crime. It is about supporting Maine's public health and economic infrastructure, and ensuring that we preserve all we have built in the last 20 years to offer safety and healing for all Mainers. Women will not achieve equity until we achieve safety, and right now, these services are core to preventing and responding to gender-based violence.

We hope you will vote 'ought to pass' on LD 875.

Sincerely,
Destie Hohman Sprague
Maine Women's Lobby