



## MAINE COMMISSION ON DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE

### Testimony of Meg Hatch

#### Speaking For LD 117, An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services

Date of Public Hearing: March 20, 2025

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

My name is Meg Hatch and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Commission on Domestic and Sexual Abuse (“the Abuse Commission”), of which I am the Vice Chair, in strong support of LD 117, An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services.

The Abuse Commission is comprised of law enforcement, attorneys, advocates, survivors, tribal representatives, a judicial advisory member, and representatives from within state government.<sup>1</sup> The Commission is tasked with advising and assisting the executive, legislative and judicial branches of State Government on issues related to domestic and sexual abuse.<sup>2</sup>

The Commission recognizes that **the demand for sexual assault services and the costs of providing them have far outpaced the state and federal funding appropriated for this purpose.** This bill addresses the widening gap by ensuring **the sustainability of critical infrastructure** for sexual violence response and prevention provided by community-based sexual assault support centers across Maine.

**LD 117 protects and preserves the supports that victims and their families need to pursue justice and healing.** The funding it provides is essential to **maintaining core, lifesaving advocacy and support services** for sexual assault survivors. Without it, Maine risks losing experienced advocates and diminishing the quality and accessibility of services survivors rely on.

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<sup>1</sup> 19-A M.R.S. § 4115 (1)

<sup>2</sup> 19-A M.R.S. § 4115 (3)

Sexual assault advocates play a vital role in **supporting survivors, ensuring their safety, and promoting justice**. They provide crisis intervention, hospital accompaniment, legal advocacy, and ongoing support. They also lead **prevention education efforts** that help stop violence before it starts. However, without sustainable funding, this work is increasingly difficult to maintain.

The Commission, appreciating the **challenging budget climate**, urges you to **prioritize LD 117** as vital to meeting Maine's **statutory commitments to victims' rights and survivor safety**.

Survivors deserve to know that when they reach out for help, someone will be there to answer.

We strongly urge you to **support and fully fund LD 117** to ensure that no survivor is left without the support they need—and that the dedicated professionals who provide these services are fairly compensated for their essential, tireless work.

Thank you.