

March 7, 2025

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

My name is Deanna Walker, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Sexual Assault Crisis and Support Center. I write in strong support of LD 117, *An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services*.

As a SART advocate and Support Line Manager, I support victims of sexual violence as they navigate their healing journey. I have witnessed survivors crying, screaming, shaking, and even becoming catatonic. But I have also seen incredible resilience—individuals who, after their healing, give back by helping others. This work is not easy; hearing repeated stories of trauma takes an emotional toll and can affect one's personal life. Fortunately, my agency provides ongoing training and education to support my role.

However, financial challenges make this work even more difficult. Covering two counties means significant wear and tear on my vehicle, and I must manage these expenses within my salary. Rising gas prices have further strained my budget, forcing me to limit driving on my time. Additionally, my health insurance does not fully cover the counseling I need, leaving me with an out-of-pocket expense of \$200. To supplement my income, I take support line shifts, but if I respond to a hospital call at 3 a.m., the additional driving and gas costs are not reimbursed.

Increased funding would allow us to hire more staff and expand our reach, ensuring more survivors across Maine receive the support they need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Deanna Walker