

“An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services”

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Public Hearing Date: March 20, 2025

Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 117

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

I am a prosecutor in Penobscot County. I prosecute domestic violence and sexual assault offenses committed against both children and adults. In my role I have the privilege of observing the work of many sexual assault services and the immeasurable impact those services have on the victims I work with and the strength of the prosecution.

Often child sexual assault criminal cases lack physical evidence and the strength of the case rests in the fact that a young child wouldn't be able to provide the details disclosed unless they experienced this abuse. Unfortunately, it is very difficult for a child to get into the level of detail required in the stressful environment of a trial. Thanks to the work done at our children's advocacy centers, children who disclose abuse have the benefit of only having to tell their story once in the comfort of a child-friendly space. Those interviews are now admissible at trial in place of a child victim's direct examination saving the child from having to describe their sexual abuse in painstaking detail in front of a room full of strangers and their abuser. The role of children's advocacy centers in the world of child abuse prosecution can't be overstated. CACs are critical to the integrity of the investigation, the strength of the state's presentation and the reduction of additional trauma to child victims.

It is sexual assault advocates who bring a much-needed element of humanity to an often cold and overwhelming court process. It is sexual assault advocates who help victims and their families find the services that they need. It is sexual assault advocates who support our victims so that they can sustain the prosecution process.

For all of these reasons I support LD 117.

Respectfully submitted,

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