

Aimee Labbe
Poland
LD 875

Testimony of Aimee Labbe on behalf of Safe Voices
In Support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic
Violence
March 19, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyers, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Service: my name is Aimee Labbe, I live in Androscoggin County, and I am writing to share why support for this critical funding is so important.

I am a resident of Poland, a Lewiston native, and a lifelong Mainer. I've been on the Safe Voices Board for the past 4 years, and I've witnessed firsthand the critical, lifesaving services and resources that the organization provides. I've also seen, through monthly reports to the board, the need for services steadily increase without a commensurate increase in funding. In short, the demand continues to outpace the supply, and with critical federal funding hanging tenuously in the balance, I fear for what's ahead, and how many survivors will be left unable to access life-saving services.

The ways in which domestic violence affects our state extend beyond the person or family directly impacted. DV permeates our communities; it is felt by children and schools, by local businesses and economies, our healthcare system, law enforcement, and social services organizations. Domestic violence is, at its core, an issue of public health.

I am so grateful that despite how challenging the last few years have been, particularly in Safe Voices' home base of Lewiston, Safe Voices and other domestic violence organizations in our state remain committed to heeding the call, and doing this challenging work. But I also know, having spoken with staff and volunteers, that it is becoming increasingly difficult to do this work with decreasing resources. Where we are now is not sustainable, and something will have to give, soon. There's still time to send a lifeline to these organizations, and send a message to the thousands of survivors in our state that they deserve to be safe.

I am aware that there are many requests for funding, and great need throughout our state. Deciding how to allocate limited dollars is not something I'm envious of. But I truly believe that we cannot make progress in any areas of our society if we do not first and foremost work to ensure that everyone has a safe home life that is free of violence. This is a basic, core need, and something every Mainer deserves.

We know that when domestic violence decreases, our communities become healthier and stronger. I urge the committee to invest in our communities by allocating funding for domestic violence programs in the upcoming budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration.