



**TESTIMONY OF GLBTQ LEGAL ADVOCATES & DEFENDERS
IN SUPPORT OF
LD 117, AN ACT TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES**
Committee on Health and Human Services
March 20, 2025

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

GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law) is a nonprofit legal organization that works in New England and nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of LD 117, An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services.

Sexual Assault Support Centers provide vital services for survivors of sexual assault, abuse, and harassment and their communities. These services include advocacy, crisis intervention, prevention programs, education, and engagement programs for survivors and those who care about them. Because of the hard work done by sexual assault advocates throughout Maine, all our communities are safer.

State funding for these essential services is vital for so many Mainers. About 37% of adult women and 8% of adult men in Maine will experience rape in their lifetime,¹ and more will experience other forms of sexual violence. Teenagers are also facing increasingly high risks of sexual violence nationwide,² and the same holds true in Maine. In fact, as of February 2023, “about 50% of the calls to Maine Sexual Assault Helpline are about experiences of sexual violence by people who are under 18.”³ Without adequately funded SASCs, vulnerable young people will lose out support when they need it most.

The services provided by SASCs are especially critical for LGBTQ+ people, who face extraordinarily high risks of sexual violence. National data indicate that about 60% of lesbian women and 79% of bisexual women experience contact sexual violence in their lifetimes,

¹ Murray, C., et al., The Catherine Cutler Institute, Maine Statistical Analysis Center, University of Southern Maine, *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing Public Policy for Safer Communities* (2022), https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/wpsites.maine.edu/dist/2/115/files/2023/01/2022-Maine-Crime-Victimization-Report_Final.pdf.

² Wight, P., Maine Public, *Maine statistics on teen sexual violence match findings in new national report* (Feb. 14, 2023), <https://www.maine-public.org/health/2023-02-14/maine-statistics-on-teen-sexual-violence-match-findings-in-new-national-report>.

³ *Id.*

compared to about 53% of heterosexual women.⁴ Similarly, about 60% of gay men and 56% of bisexual men experience contact sexual violence in their lifetimes, compared to about 29% of heterosexual men.⁵ The data are even more shocking for LGBTQ+ women of color. For example, almost 94% of Hispanic bisexual women experience contact sexual violence in their lifetimes.⁶ Transgender people also face elevated rates of sexual violence and repeated sexual victimization throughout their lives.⁷

SASCs need support from the State to address an ongoing and severe staffing crisis and to conduct targeted outreach to the communities most impacted by sexual violence. When SASCs have the funding they need to effectuate their mission, all Mainers benefit. GLAD Law respectfully urges this committee to support LD 117.

Sincerely,

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⁴ Chen, J. et al., U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Serv's., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Georgia National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) 2016/2017 Report on Victimization by Sexual Identity* at 7 (Oct. 2023), <https://www.cdc.gov/nisvs/documentation/nisvsReportonSexualIdentity.pdf>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.* at 9.

⁷ *Id.* at 1; see also Abern, L. et al., *Prevalence of Sexual Assault in a Cohort of Transgender and Gender Diverse Individuals*, 38(5), *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 1331-1333 (Nov. 10, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-022-07900-y>.