



**LEGAL SERVICES
FOR MAINE ELDERS**

LD 117 – An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services

Testimony of John Brautigam, Esq. for Legal Services for Maine Elders
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

March 20, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is John Brautigam, and I am here today on behalf of Legal Services for Maine Elders. LSE provides free legal help for Mainers aged 60 and older when their basic human needs are at stake.

I am here to advocate for the critical investments needed to support survivors, prevent sexual violence, and reinforce the work of the organizations that provide these life-saving services.

Sexual violence affects individuals of all backgrounds, including our friends, neighbors, and family members. It is a pervasive issue with devastating consequences for survivors, communities, and society as a whole. According to some national statistics, one in three women and one in six men experience sexual violence in their lifetime. Yet, despite the profound need, funding for sexual assault services remains a challenge.

Maine organizations providing sexual assault prevention and response services are at the forefront of addressing this crisis. They offer essential resources such as crisis hotlines, emergency shelters, legal advocacy, medical accompaniment, trauma counseling, and prevention education. These services are not luxuries; they are lifelines for survivors who often face significant barriers to healing and justice.

At LSE we have seen firsthand the impact of these programs. Survivors who receive timely support are more likely to access medical care, report their assault, and begin the healing process. Prevention programs, which educate individuals on consent, healthy relationships, and bystander intervention, are proven strategies for reducing the incidence of sexual violence. Despite their effectiveness, many of these programs operate with limited resources, struggling to meet demand.

LEGAL SERVICES FOR MAINE ELDERS, INC.
5 Wabon Street, Augusta, Maine 04333
(207) 621-0087 Fax (207) 621-0742
Offices in Augusta, Bangor, Lewiston, Biddeford and Presque Isle
LSE Helpline 1-800-750-5353 (Voice/TTY)
www.mainelse.org

March 20, 2025

Legal Services for Maine Elders – LD 117

Page 2

The reality is that it has been hard to make sure that funding keeps up with the need. We need to ensure that there are no long wait times for counseling, adequately trained advocates, and effective 24/7 crisis response capabilities. Survivors should not have to navigate a system that lacks resources to support them when they need it most. Funding constitutes a strategic investment in public safety, public health, and the well-being of our communities.

Survivors deserve to be believed, supported, and empowered, and the organizations that serve them must have the resources necessary to continue their vital work.

Thank you.