



Maine Sheriffs' Association

"One Team, One Mission"

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March 20, 2025

TESTIMONY OF SHERIFF KEN MASON MAINE SHERIFFS ASSOCIATION

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

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee of Health and Human Services. My name is Sheriff Ken Mason. I am the sheriff of Kennebec County and the chair of the Maine Sheriffs Association's legislative policy committee and I am here today on their behalf.

Your Maine Sheriffs have taken the position of Support for LD 117 – An Act to Provide funding for Sexual Assault Services.

"Maine has long been a state that values community, safety and support for those in need. Yet recent federal to domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking prevention programs threaten to undermine these values, leaving survivors without critical resources and putting lives in danger. The Legislature must step up and fill the funding void left by the federal government." This passage was part of a press release dated February 27, of this year, and the author was one of the bill's sponsors, Representative Stover.

The Cutler Institute released the Maine Victim Needs Assessment report in early 2023. In this report, they indicated that 489 incidents of rape were reported to Maine law enforcement in 2020. Additionally, a survey of all Maine high schools students, conducted by Maine DHHS and Maine Department of Education, indicated that 10.8% of high school girls and 4.0% of high school boys responded "yes" when asked, "Have you been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?"

The report goes on to say, "Core victim services for crime victims are negatively impacted by chronic staffing issues, particularly among sexual assault advocate victim service providers and Victim Witness Advocates. Low pay, ongoing staff turnover, unmet supervision needs, and overhead costs to administer funding negatively impact the quality of services and the ability to reach all crime victims."

Maine sheriffs applaud the sponsors of this bill for recognizing the importance of critical funding to ensure sexual assault victims receive the services they need. We unanimously voted to support LD 117 and urge members of this committee to vote ought to pass.

It would be my pleasure to answer any questions you may have, and I am happy to forward the Victim Needs Assessment to any committee members, if requested.