



Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony in Support of L.D. 875, *An Act to Fund Essential Services for
Victims of Domestic Violence*
By Heide Lester on behalf of EqualityMaine

March 19, 2025

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

My name is Heide Lester, and I am the Deputy Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly support L.D. 875, *An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence*.

Like all forms of abuse, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is about maintaining power and control, and can occur regardless of a victim or perpetrator's sexual orientation or gender identity. However, LGBTQ+ people are equally as likely, if not more so, than their cisgender and heterosexual peers to have experienced IPV at some point in their lifetimes. For example, bisexual women are significantly more likely than straight women to have ever experienced IPV in their lifetime,¹ and more than half of all trans and non-binary people have experienced IPV at some point in their lifetimes.² According to the 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, among Maine high schoolers who had a dating relationship in the preceding year, LGBTQ+ youth reported having a partner who physically hurt them on purpose at least once approximately twice as much as cisgender, heterosexual students.³

Domestic Violence Resource Centers (DVRCs) in Maine worked with nearly 15,000 people statewide in 2024. Over 12,000 of those were directly experiencing abuse and violence, and 48% of adults served had at least one child in their home.⁴ DVRCs help survivors find safe housing, offer support navigating the court system, provide information about legal options, community resources, and support networks, assist with safety plans, and provide individual advocacy, support, and assistance to survivors of human trafficking. They also offer community education, prevention, and training on domestic abuse and support those who reach out to them out of concern for their friends, family members, and co-workers.

We urge you to vote "Ought To Pass" on L.D. 875. Maine's DVRCs have been working and organizing in our communities for decades and it is essential to provide them with the funding they need.

Thank you,

Heide Lester (they/them)

¹ "Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Abuse Among LGBT People." *Williams Institute*, 21 June 2020, williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/ipv-sex-abuse-lgbt-people/.

² "The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey." *National Center for Transgender Equality*, 2016, transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Full-Report-Dec17.pdf.

³ "High School Detailed Report," Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 2023, maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2023_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2023_Detailed_Reports_HS_State/Maine%20High%20School%20Detailed%20Tables.pdf.

⁴ FY 2024 Data Dashboard, Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence Data Dashboards, mcedv.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/FY-24-Dashboard-1.22.25-1.pdf.