



April 16, 2025

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor:

My name is Melissa Martin, and I am offering testimony today on behalf of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA), the organization which represents and serves Maine's sexual violence prevention and response programs as well as Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers. MECASA initiates and advocates for victim-centered public policy; provides expert training, technical assistance, and resources for providers and partners; and funds the service providers in your communities.

MECASA is here today to testify neither for nor against LD 1554, "**An Act to Require Sexual Harassment Prevention Training for Restaurant Employees.**" Thank you to Representative Sato for sponsoring this important legislation.

Sexual harassment in the restaurant industry is a significant and serious issue. As many as 90% of women and 70% of men report experiencing some form of sexual harassment in the restaurant industry, making this the industry that sees the highest percentage of reports.¹ Sexual harassment in the restaurant industry impacts workers economic stability and life outside of work.² There are a number of policy solutions to this issue, including important work that Maine has already undertaken, such as implementing a paid medical and family leave system.³ In addition, having strong policies and training with enforcement mechanisms is vital.⁴

This bill outlines important work toward ensuring that workplaces have strong sexual harassment prevention policies; however, we have some concerns with the bill as currently drafted. First,

¹ Stefanie K. Johnson and Juan M. Madera, *Sexual Harassment Is Pervasive in the Restaurant Industry. Here's What Needs to Change*, Harvard Business Review, January 18, 2018

² ROC United, *Take Us Off the Menu: The Impact of Sexual Harassment in the Restaurant Industry*, May 2018

³ The Restaurant Opportunities Center United Forward Together, *The Glass Floor: Sexual Harassment in the Restaurant Industry*, October 7, 2014

⁴ *Id.*

the bill as currently drafted would have the Department of Labor create a single model policy for all restaurants. This would discourage some larger restaurant groups from implementing best practices that may be advisable and affordable for them, such as utilizing an external investigator or trainer. By having one policy for restaurants of all sizes, the DOL will be forced to recommend policies that can apply to small restaurants as well. These policies will likely not be the ideal or best practices that larger restaurants can and should be encouraged to utilize. Therefore, we advise against a single model policy, because it could discourage some restaurants who want to go above and beyond requirements.

Second, the bill as currently drafted could potentially be used as a defense in sexual harassment cases by allowing an employer to assert the mere presence of a policy as part of their defense. We do not think simply having a mandated policy should be a defense in sexual harassment cases, therefore; **we strongly recommend the bill be amended to include a provision clarifying that an employer adopting a sexual harassment policy may not be considered a defense to a sexual harassment claim.**

We have discussed these concerns with the bill sponsor, who is a thoughtful and committed advocate for these issues, and we plan to continue to work with her and other partners to craft an amendment to this bill that will address these concerns.

About Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers

One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.⁵ Each year, 19,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.⁶

Maine's [sexual violence service providers](#) provide free and confidential services across the state to victims/survivors of sexual harassment and sexual assault and those close to them, as well as to individuals who wish to increase their understanding of the issues. Just some of the services include a 24-hour statewide sexual assault helpline, crisis intervention and information, support groups, in-person accompaniment and advocacy through the medical and legal systems, and school- and community-based prevention education. Services are provided for a victim/survivor regardless of when they experienced sexual violence, and regardless of what type of sexual violence they experienced. Types of sexual violence include, but are not limited to, sexual harassment and gender-based bullying, child sexual abuse, elder sexual abuse, stalking, sex trafficking, and sexual violence within an intimate partner relationship.

24/7 Confidential

Maine Sexual Assault Helpline: [1-800-871-7741](tel:1-800-871-7741)

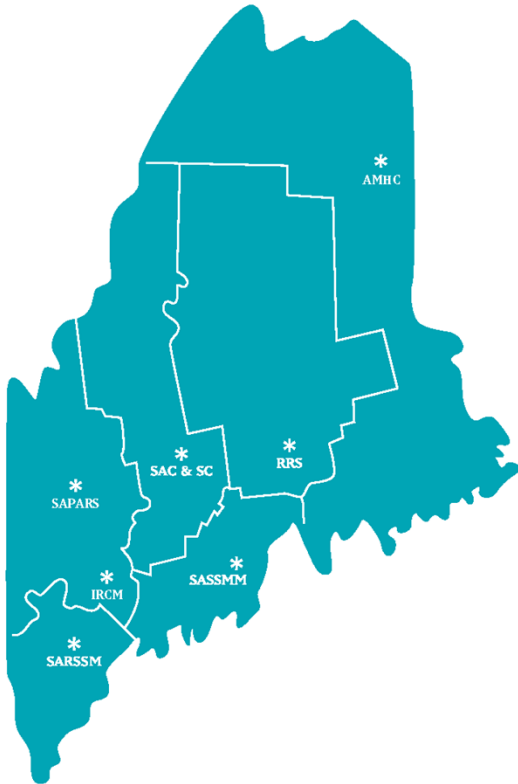
⁵ Murray, C., Dumont, R & Shaler, G. (2022). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Maine Statistical Analysis Center. University of Southern Maine.

⁶ *Ibid.*

mecasa

MAINE COALITION AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT

info@mecasa.org | mecasa.org
207-626-0034



STATEWIDE
SEXUAL ASSAULT HELPLINE
1-800-871-7741

Free. Private. 24/7.

MAINE'S SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTERS

AMHC Sexual Assault Services (AMHC)

Serving Aroostook, Hancock, & Washington Counties •
amhcsas.org

Immigrant Resource Center of Maine

Serving Androscoggin & Cumberland Counties • ircofmaine.org

Rape Response Services (RRS)

Serving Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties • rrsonline.org

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Services (SAPARS)

Serving Androscoggin, Oxford & Franklin Counties and the towns of
Bridgton & Harrison • sapars.org

Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Center (SAC & SC)

Serving Kennebec & Somerset Counties • silentnomore.org

Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM)

Serving Cumberland & York Counties • sarssm.org

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM)

Serving Eastern Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Knox, Waldo & Lincoln
Counties • sassmm.org

MORE SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES

Maine TransNet • mainetrans.net • info@mainetransnet.org

Wabanaki Women's Coalition • wabanakiwomenscoalition.org
207-763-3478

Aroostook Band of Micmacs, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-551-3639

Houlton Band of Maliseets, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-532-6401

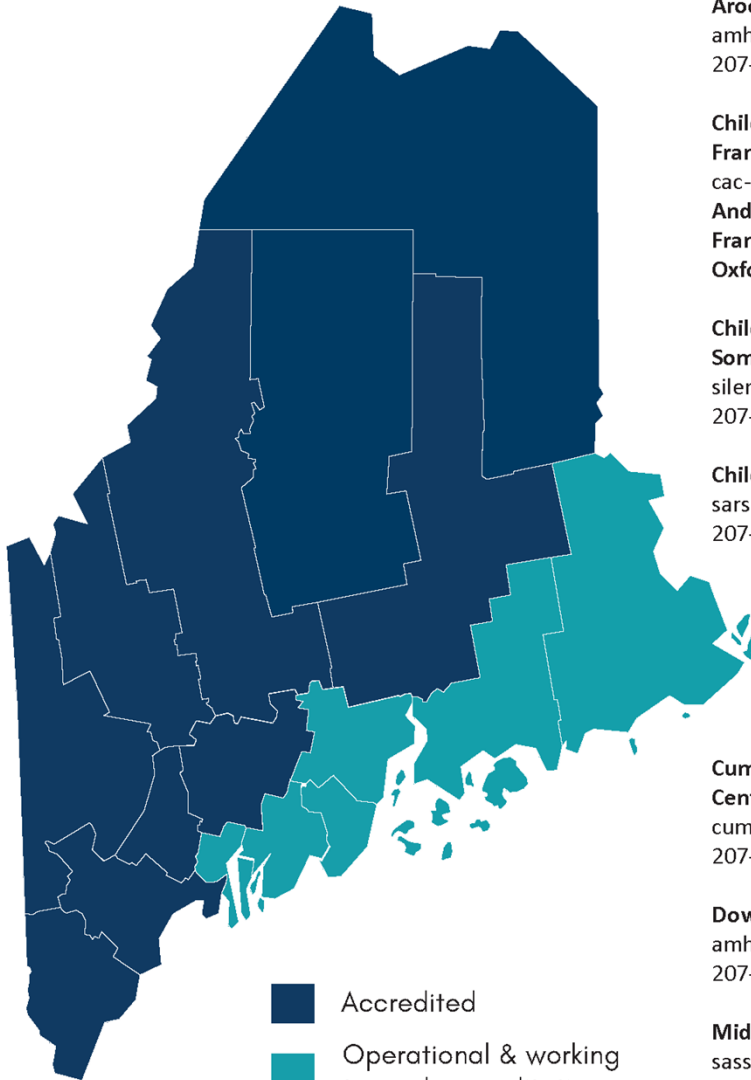
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations • 1-877-853-2613

Penobscot Indian Nation, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-631-4886



Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers



■ Accredited
■ Operational & working toward accreditation

Aroostook County Children's Advocacy Center
amhcsas.org
207-472-6134

Children's Advocacy Center of Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford Counties
cac-afo.org
Androscoggin: 207-784-0436
Franklin: 207-778-9777
Oxford: 207-739-1228

Children's Advocacy Center of Kennebec & Somerset Counties
silentnomore.org/about-our-cac
207-861-4491

Children's Advocacy Center of York County
sarsmm.org
207-459-2380

Cumberland County Children's Advocacy Center
cumberlandcountycac.org
207-879-6160

Downeast Children's Advocacy Center
amhcsas.org
207-255-3687

Midcoast Children's Advocacy Center
sassmm.org
207-522-7162

Penquis Children's Advocacy Center
penquiscac.org
207-974-2469