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April 17, 2025

Senator Anne Carney, Chair
Representative Amy Kuhn, Chair
Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Re: LD 1139, *An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes*

Greetings Senator Carney and Representative Kuhn,

I am writing today to testify in support of LD 1139, *An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes*.

This bill would respond to the drastic reduction of federal funds from the Victims of Crime Act ("VOCA") as well as the instability of the current federal government's future funding of VOCA. The Office of the Attorney General ("OAG") is concerned with the potential significant impact on cuts to vital services provided to victims by a range of service providers and to victim witness advocacy services provided by my office and other prosecutorial offices across the state.

First, there are a number of service providers who utilize VOCA funds for a range of important services for victims of crime. Organizations like MECASA, MCEDV, and Pine Tree Legal provide services that support victims as they move forward. The work of these providers is meaningful to those who have been victimized.

Second, the OAG receives VOCA funding that supports a Victim Witness Advocate ("VWA") coordinator position, which provides training and technical assistance to VWAs across the state, and that supports three VWAs in the OAG Criminal Division, who work directly with victims to carry out victims rights services required by statute. Further, a small amount of VOCA funding supports VWA services in six of the eight prosecutorial districts. We appreciate the Governor's inclusion of funding for this purpose in the biennial budget but that funding has not yet been approved.

With respect to the work of VWAs, responsibilities include providing emotional support for victims throughout the criminal justice process, helping victims make resource referrals and, when appropriate, applications to the Victims Compensation Fund, notifying victims of court dates, preparing victims for trial, and helping victims prepare to testify and give impact statements.

Effective victim services increase efficiency and effectiveness in the criminal justice system – when victim don't have their basic survival and psychological needs met, they often struggle to testify as witnesses, exercise their rights, and appear in court. Victim witness advocates help victims address their housing, transportation, childcare, financial, mental health and substance use treatment needs so they can meaningfully participate in their own case. When crime victims receive the support they need and experience recovery and stability, they are less likely to experience re-victimization and less likely to commit harm to others.

LD 1139 is necessary to ensure our state continues to provide the level of services to victims that they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aaron M. Frey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Aaron" being the most prominent part.

Aaron M. Frey
Attorney General