

May 8, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

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 submitting testimony in opposition to **LD 868, An Act to Ensure Equity and Safety in Athletics, Restrooms, Changing Rooms and Housing at Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Schools**; **LD 1134, An Act to Prohibit Males from Participating in Female Sports or Using Female Facilities**; **LD 1704, An Act to Prohibit a School Administrative Unit from Adopting a Policy That Allows a Student to Use a Restroom Designated for Use by the Opposite Sex**; and **LD 1337, An Act to Amend the Maine Human Rights Act Regarding Female Athletes and Safety in Women's Single-sex Shelters**.

In particular, we oppose these bills because they risk increasing sexual violence in our communities.

There is no data to suggest that including transgender people in gendered spaces leads to increased risk of sexual violence.<sup>1</sup> Instead, there is overwhelming data that transgender people—especially trans women—face extraordinarily high rates of sexual violence, and that exclusionary

**Commented [GU1]:** I am a little wary of noting what legislators believe or understand - I hope that this statement would be the case, but maybe it's better to say it like in version #2 - "we understand..." Feel free to ignore me here, as I am still afflicted by years learned nonpartisan paralysis and dysfunctional conflict avoidance.

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<sup>1</sup> Murchison, G. R., Agénor, M., Reisner, S. L., & Watson, R. J. (2019). School restroom and locker room restrictions and sexual assault risk among transgender youth. *Pediatrics*, 143(6), e20182902. [https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2902:contentReference\[oaicite:22\]{index=22}](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2902:contentReference[oaicite:22]{index=22})

public accommodation policies leave gender diverse youth at greater risk of experiencing sexual violence.<sup>2</sup>

In Maine, 70% of transgender individuals have experienced sexual violence in their lifetimes.<sup>3</sup> Forty-one percent of transgender youth report forced sexual contact—compared to 11% of cisgender youth.<sup>4</sup> These bills would further isolate and endanger people who are already among the most at-risk for sexual harm.

A 2021 study by researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health found that transgender and nonbinary youth who were denied access to bathrooms and locker rooms matching their gender identity were significantly more likely to experience sexual assault.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, a national analysis by the Williams Institute at UCLA found that transgender individuals are over four times more likely than cisgender people to experience violent victimization, including sexual assault—highlighting both the urgency of protecting trans people and the lack of evidence that inclusion increases harm to others.<sup>6</sup>

Part of our work is running Maine’s network of Children’s Advocacy Centers, where children across the state are interviewed in cases of suspected child sexual abuse. Over 99% of these cases involve someone known to the child. In other words, the risk for sexual abuse in children is not strangers, but those that they know. Further, it is usually someone in their own home or family—all but about 15% are family or household members, and the remaining 15% are acquaintances or peers.

These bills would prevent trans people—especially youth, survivors, and unhoused women and children—from accessing safe spaces during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. We urge the committee not to advance legislation that creates a false sense of security while causing real, lasting harm. The safety of survivors—including trans survivors—requires serious, evidence-based action.

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<sup>2</sup> Murchison, G. R., Agénor, M., Reisner, S. L., & Watson, R. J. (2019). School restroom and locker room restrictions and sexual assault risk among transgender youth. *Pediatrics*, 143(6), e20182902. [https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2902:contentReference\[oaicite:22\]{index=22}](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2902:contentReference[oaicite:22]{index=22})

<sup>3</sup> Maine Transgender Community Survey Results.

<sup>4</sup> Maine Integrated Youth Survey.

<sup>5</sup> Murchison, G. R., Agénor, M., Reisner, S. L., & Watson, R. J. (2019). School restroom and locker room restrictions and sexual assault risk among transgender youth. *Pediatrics*, 143(6), e20182902. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2902>

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, B. D. M., Choi, S. K., & Herman, J. L. (2021). *Gender identity disparities in criminal victimization: National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017–2018*. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/ncvs-trans-2017-2018/>

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### About Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers

One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.<sup>7</sup> Each year, 19,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.<sup>8</sup>

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)*

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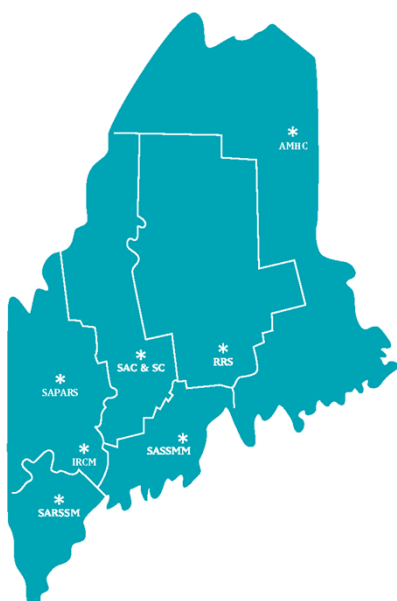
<sup>7</sup> Murray, C., Dumont, R & Shaler, G. (2022). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Maine Statistical Analysis Center. University of Southern Maine.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

# 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

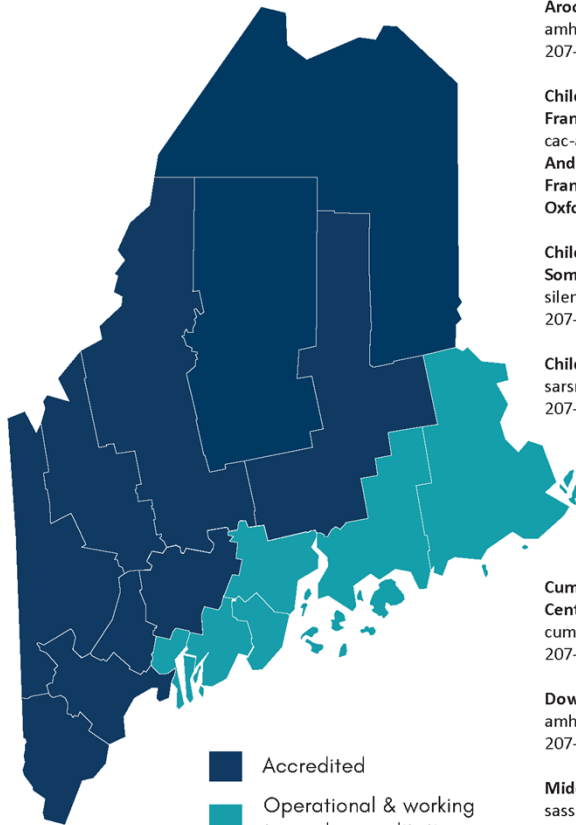
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual  
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

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-afco.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