



May 19, 2025

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

My name is Melissa Martin, and I am submitting 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 in support of LD 1259, An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement. Thank you to Representative Rana for bringing this legislation and Senator Talbot Ross, Representatives Abdi, Cloutier, Dhalac, Kuhn, McCabe, Sachs, and Sato, as well as Senator Carney for cosponsoring.

Survivors of sexual harm have many barriers in reporting—they may be worried about retaliation and their physical safety; they may worry about being believed, especially if there is no physical evidence; and they may be worried about the re-traumatization of the criminal process.

Immigrants are particularly at risk of sexual assault because of, among other things, their lack of familiarity with their legal rights, misinformation they may have about the U.S. legal system, lack of access to service providers, and language barrier issues.<sup>1</sup>

If the barriers are high enough, some survivors will simply choose not to report. Although we strongly support survivor choice in whether or not to report to law enforcement, we also strive to remove any unnecessary barriers that prevent sexual harm survivors from feeling safe reporting to law enforcement.

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<sup>1</sup> *Id.*

This is particularly pressing for minors. Immigrant girls are twice as likely as U.S.-born girls to have suffered sexual assault by the time they reach high school.<sup>2</sup> Our sexual assault advocates and those that work at our Children's Advocacy Centers are all mandated reporters. If local law enforcement poses a significant risk to a survivor, even a child survivor, the family may feel they cannot access any support or services. This makes not only the child victim's family less safe, but our community as a whole. For these reasons, we strongly support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope you will support LD 1259 and would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

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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>3</sup> Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.<sup>4</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>2</sup> *Id.*

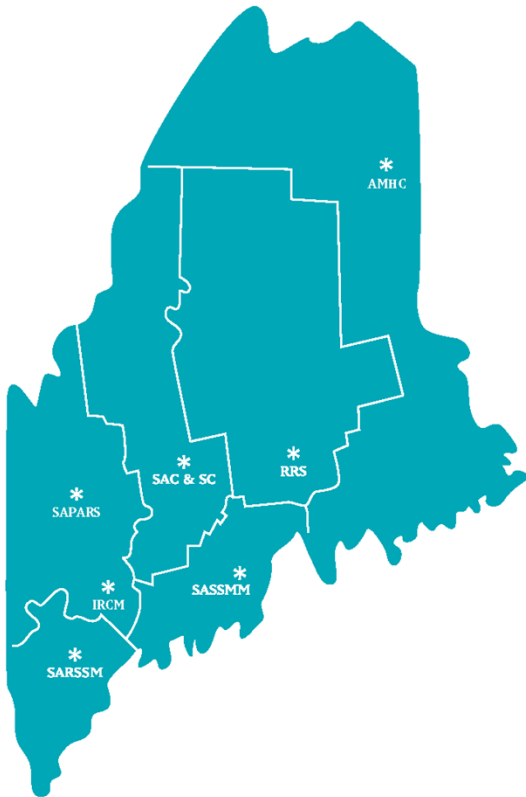
<sup>3</sup> Dumont, R. & Shaler, G. (2015). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

<sup>4</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 Androscoggin, Hancock, & Washington Counties •  
amhcsexualassaultservices.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 • sarsonline.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

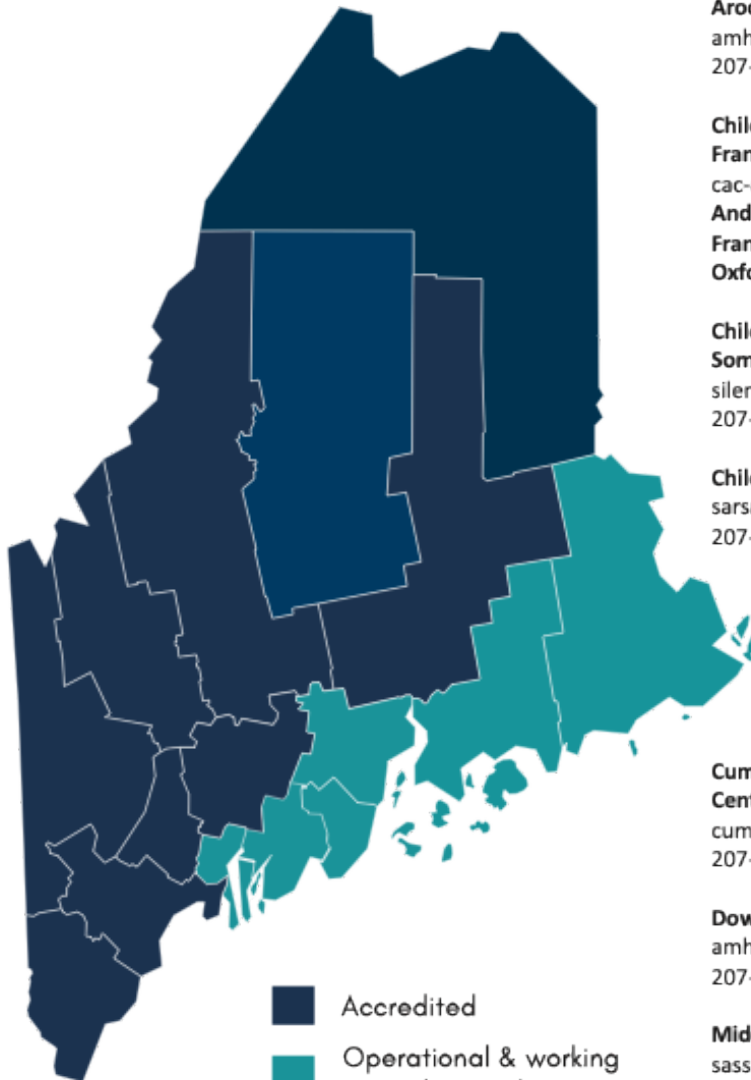
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual  
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations • 1-877-853-2613

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



## Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers



**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