



MaineTrans.Net

redefining gender

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Maine Transgender Network
LD 566 “An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services”
March 27, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Quinn Gormley, I use she/her pronouns, and I am here today as the Executive Director of the Maine Transgender Network in support of LD 566 **“An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services”**

Founded in 2005, MaineTransNet is a community based organization led by transgender people for transgender people. Our mission is to support and empower transgender people to create a world where they can thrive. We provide peer-to-peer support groups, social and community events, policy advocacy for our community, and education and training services for providers and institutions that serve transgender people. Our work is rooted in a deep desire to care for one another, which leads us to focus our efforts on building systems of mutual support on a bedrock of accessibility, inclusivity, and hospitality. We are the sole organization in Maine specifically dedicated to working with transgender people, those who love us, and those who care for us.

Throughout that work, one truth is constant: in serving transgender people, we are serving survivors of violence. Data from the 2021 Maine Transgender Community Survey found that at least 70% of transgender Mainers had experienced sexual assault at least once in their lifetime, often more than once. This violence by and large started young — the mean age of first assault was 12 years old — and is strongly associated with poor health outcomes and suicide risk. Among multiply marginalized populations the risks are higher. 86% of trans people of color in Maine have a lifetime experience of sexual assault, and 91% of trans people with physical disabilities do. And it is often still ongoing. 10% of respondents indicated having been assaulted in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Recognizing the endemic nature of sexual violence in our community, and the reality that systems of support for survivors need help supporting trans survivors, MaineTransNet has worked alongside MECASA and its member centers for 7 years to improve these systems. This work involves ongoing, mutual technical assistance between member centers and MTN in how best to meet the needs of survivors, an ongoing training relationship, and the provision of programming, led by us, for trans survivors. Funding from this bill will enable us to sustainably continue that shared work.

It will also allow us to expand our work. Trans survivors face unique challenges when navigating systems of support, healthcare, and justice. Our staff is increasingly asked to help survivors to navigate these systems and we desperately want to, and feel we need to, offer such services. This support is sometimes alongside a local center, or independent of the centers. Unfortunately, without additional capacity in the form of funding and staffing, we are not able to expand our services to meet this need.

We are aware that topics of transgender inclusion are a hot button issue in this political moment. It's likely our organization holds quite different views on what is needed to address systemic issues impacting our communities, and how to best integrate trans people into the broader world. But this bill isn't about that. This bill is about supporting people who've been violated and hurt to be able to heal.

We implore you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 566.

Thank you,

Quinn Gormley

she/her

Executive Director

Maine Transgender Network