

April 11, 2023

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on 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 support¹ of LD 1436 An Act to Provide Remedies to Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation. Thank you to Representative Reckitt for bringing this legislation.

We support the main provisions of this bill in terms of decriminalization for a person engaged in consensual sex work or commercial sexual exploitation or potentially trafficking. Decriminalization allows clearer access to law enforcement and community services after incidents of sexual violence because it removes fear of arrest and prosecution.

Record sealing furthers these goals by removing many of the collateral consequences to criminal prosecution in the past from these prosecutions.

In addition, we are generally supportive of data collection of the type outlined in this bill.

The only piece of this bill that may be duplicative to current work being done is the creation of the task force. There is already a group called Maine Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Network (STEN) that does much of what the task force would be instructed to do.

The Maine STEN provides training, technical assistance, and resources to direct service providers engaged in anti-trafficking efforts in Maine, as well as community awareness and public policy

¹ One local sexual assault center has abstained in voting to support this bill, but all of the remaining centers are in support.

support. The effort is supported by a statewide Provider Council, and it is a program of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

Efforts include:

- **Training and technical assistance** for local anti-trafficking efforts, direct services providers, and multidisciplinary teams across the state regarding nationally recognized best practices, including staffing the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Work Group.
- **Tools to support more effective provision of services** to anti-trafficking providers, such as a statewide volunteer databank, a trafficking victim support fund, a bi-monthly electronic resource round-up, and resources such as shared screening tools.
- **A web-based collection of resources** with links to Maine anti-trafficking efforts, Maine and national statutes related to trafficking, and outreach materials and model policies and protocols.
- **Public policy advocacy** to support a Maine-based anti-trafficking response that is informed by effective nationally recognized practices and which meets the needs of the Maine community.

Maine STEN Provider Council

Purpose:

- To inform local service provision and training as it pertains to statewide systems and resources, including the Maine Attorney General's Work Group.
- To provide updates to local anti-trafficking multidisciplinary teams.
- To inform protocols and distribution of the Survivor Support Fund coordinated by MECASA.

Efforts:

The Maine STEN Provider Council supports MECASA staff in prioritizing anti-trafficking efforts, and developing a coherent statewide response from direct service providers on these issues. Some of the projects worked on by the Provider Council include:

- Supporting and advising the statewide needs assessment;
- Consultation on statewide training and outreach materials;
- Feedback on statewide service needs and gaps;
- Approval of protocols for Survivor Support Fund distribution; and
- Evaluation of National Human Trafficking Hotline referral protocol.

Participants:

All direct service providers represented on the AG's Trafficking Work Group and service provider chairs of local anti-trafficking multidisciplinary teams are invited to participate. Participating agencies include:

- Aroostook Mental Health Center (AMHC) Sexual Assault Services
- Through These Doors
- Immigrant Resource Center of Maine
- Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (staff)
- Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence

- New Hope Midcoast
- Partners for Peace
- Pine Tree Legal Services
- Preble Street Anti-Trafficking Services
- Rape Response Services
- Safe Voices
- St Andre Homes/Hope Rising
- Sexual Assault Crisis and Support Center
- Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Program
- Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Services
- Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine
- Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine
- Survivor Speak USA
- US Attorney's Office Victim Witness Coordinators

Thank you for your consideration. We hope that you will support LD 1436 and would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

About Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers

One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.² Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.³

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*

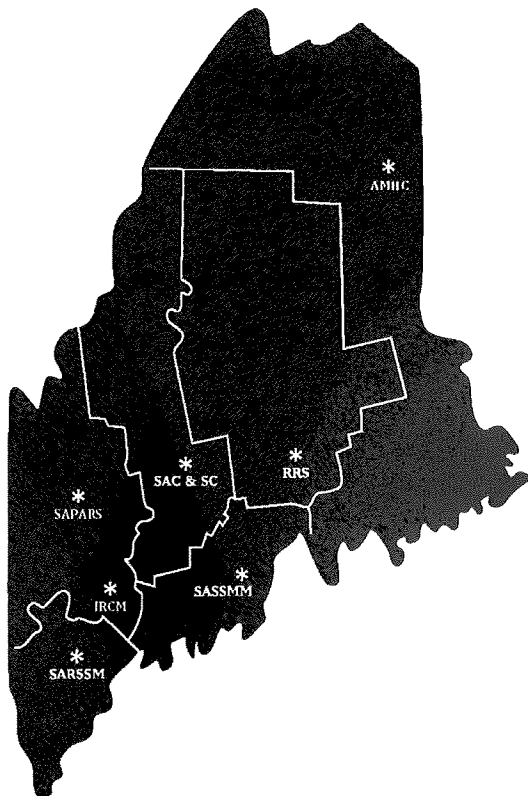
² Dumont, R. & Shaler, G. (2015). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

³ *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 •
amhsexualassaultservices.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

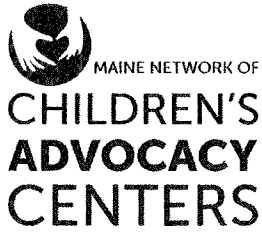
Aroostook Band of Micmacs, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-551-3639

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

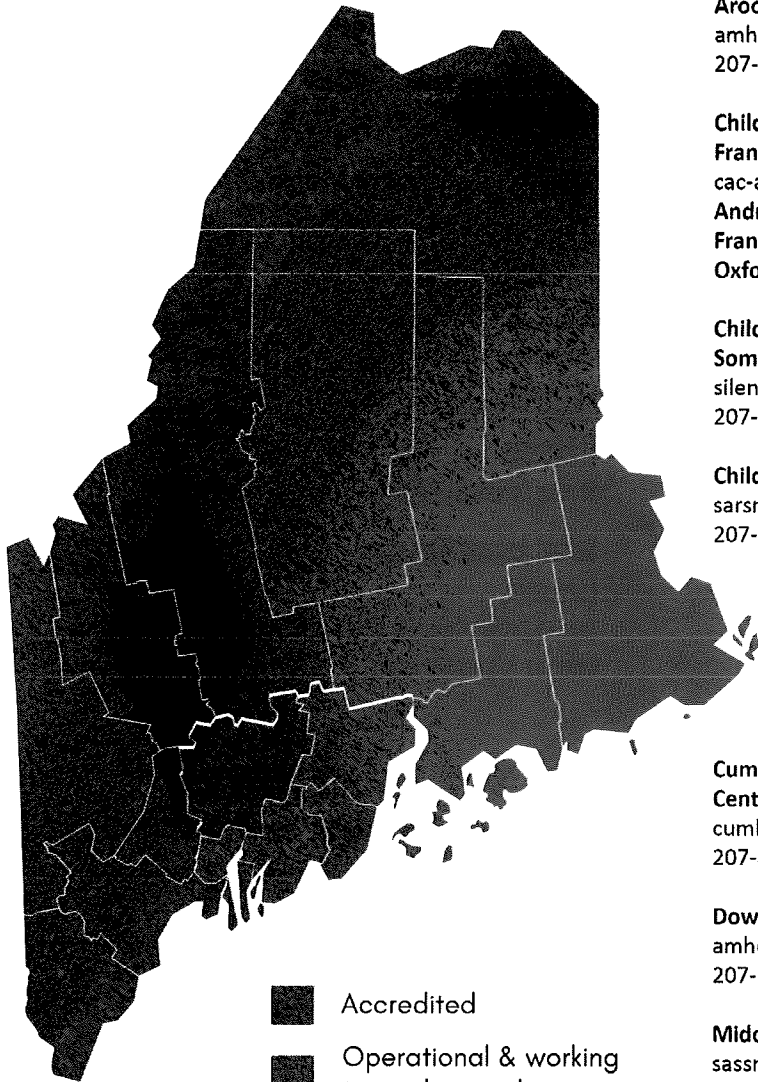
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations • 1-877-853-2613

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



Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers



- 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