



MAINE COMMISSION ON DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Testimony of Lucia Chomeau Hunt

Speaking in Support of LD 1783

**An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Governor's Advisory Council
On Military Sexual Trauma**

Date of Public Hearing: May 1, 2023

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

My name is Lucia Hunt. I am a member of the Maine Commission on Domestic and Sexual Abuse ("the Commission") and I was appointed to the Governor's Advisory Council on Military Sexual Trauma as a representative of the Abuse Commission. I am here today speaking in support of LD 1783, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Governor's Advisory Council on Military Sexual Trauma.

The Commission is comprised of law enforcement, attorneys, advocates, survivors, tribal members, representatives of underserved communities, a judicial advisory member, and representatives from within state government.¹ The Commission is tasked with advising and assisting the executive, legislative and judicial branches of State Government on issues related to domestic and sexual abuse.² Part of our role is examining systems that support survivors in Maine, and the Governor's Advisory Council provided some unique opportunities to learn about the ways that Maine's National Guard and state infrastructure intersect.

The process also highlighted some gaps that made it challenging for the Advisory Council to make meaningful recommendations. This bill will help to address those gaps.

Access to Data about Sexual Assault and Harassment in the Maine National Guard

This bill will require the annual submission of a report to this Committee. The information that must be included in the report will help address a consistent theme of our conversations at

¹ 19-A M.R.S. § 4115 (1)

² 19-A M.R.S. § 4115 (3)

each meeting of the Advisory Council- the lack of data available to the group about the prevalence of the problem of sexual assault and harassment within the Maine National Guard.

Having access to data about reported incidents of sexual assault and harassment is fundamental to understanding the scope of the problem and taking steps to address this issue. Access to additional data points about membership in the Maine National Guard, including discharge and promotion rates and reasons, and information about training, prevention, and disciplinary actions will mean that a group tasked with reviewing and making recommendations about sexual assault and harassment, along with this Committee, will have sufficient information to make meaningful recommendations and monitor whether there has been progress toward addressing the problems.

Paid Leave

This bill also adds a requirement for paid leave if a member of the Maine National Guard requests leave after reporting being the victim of sexual assault or harassment. This type of accommodation is important for survivors, given the impact that sexual assault and harassment often have on employment, as well as in consideration of the small community within the Guard and potential proximity of members during drill.

Funding and Alignment with Maine's Existing Infrastructure

The bill also aligns application to the State's Victim Compensation Fund with reporting sexual assault within the Maine National Guard. This allows survivors to use the process of reporting within the National Guard to qualify for Victim's Compensation by clarifying that such a report meets the law enforcement reporting requirement.

Because of the expertise required in multiple systems to address the needs of survivors of Military Sexual Trauma, funding to support a liaison and cover programming costs is essential to implementing systems that effectively support survivors in the Maine National Guard.

Abuse Commission Support

The Abuse Commission supports implementation of the recommendations of the Governor's Advisory Council on Military Sexual Trauma that are highlighted in this bill, and looks forward to the next steps in the complicated work of integrating Maine's systems that support survivors to benefit members of the Maine National Guard who have experienced sexual assault and harassment.

Thank you to Representative Rielly and this Committee for your work on behalf of survivors in the Maine National Guard. I would be happy to attempt to answer any questions.