

mecasa

**MAINE COALITION AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT**

May 10, 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 support of LD 1790, an Act Removing the Statute of Limitations on Criminal and Civil Actions Involving Sexual Abuse of Minors. Thank you to Senator Baldacci for bringing this legislation.

Each year, approximately 14,000 Mainers experience sexual assault. 6,000-7,000 Mainers reach out to our 24/7 helpline. About half of those calls are about sexual violence that happened to minors, but many of those calls are from adults who are disclosing their abuse for the first time.

Delayed reporting in sexual violence cases is extremely common for a variety of reasons, including fear of retaliation, fear of not being believed, self-blame about what happened, not having a support person, or not understanding what happened. With minors, delayed reporting is the norm, not the exception. About 85% of survivors of childhood sexual harm delay reporting, or never report their abuse.

This bill would do two important things. In civil cases, where this Committee already abolished the civil statute of limitations in certain sexual violence crimes against minors, this bill expands that abolishment to all the forms of sexual violence codified under Maine law. In criminal cases, the bill expands the statute of limitations in minor sexual violence cases (1) from all minors under 16 to all minors under 18, and (2) to all forms of sexual violence codified under Maine law.

We believe that both of these expansions continue the important work of this Committee to ensure that when minors experience sexual violence, they are able to bring their civil or criminal

claims when they are ready to report. This work also ensures that those who have caused harm to minor victims can be held accountable.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope you will support LD 1790 and would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

About Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers

One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.¹ Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.²

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

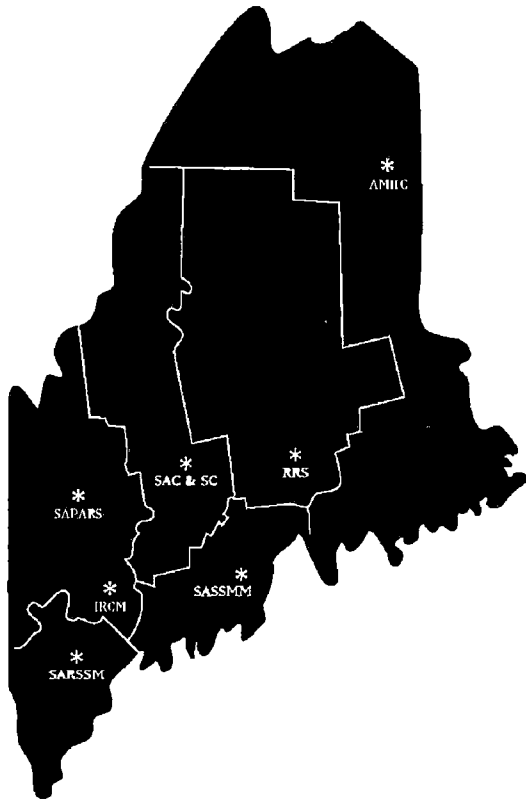
¹ Dumont, R. & Shaler, G. (2015) *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

² *Ibid*

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**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 •
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

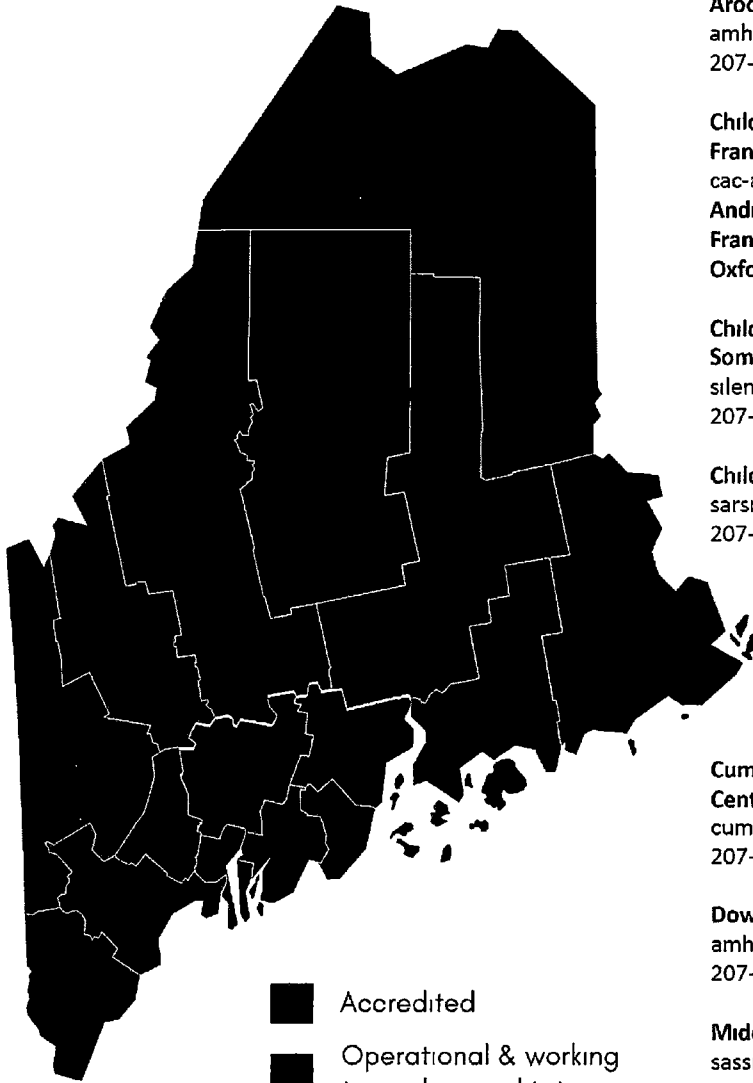
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual
Violence Advocacy Center • 207 214 1917

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