

May 25, 2023

Senator Tipping, Representative Roeder, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing:

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 to LD 1964 An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Develop a Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program. Thank you to Senator Daughtry and Representative Cloutier for bringing this legislation.

At MECASA, we conduct an annual Needs Assessment where we survey all of our statewide sexual assault advocates about the greatest needs for survivors of sexual violence. In the past year, the greatest need has been basic needs such as housing, food, and healthcare. All of these needs could be better addressed when survivors have access to paid leave, whether or not they are seeking paid leave directly for the sexual violence they experienced.

In particular, although we are here in strong support of all portions of this bill, we do specifically support the provisions of this bill that would provide paid safe leave to survivors of sexual violence.

As an attorney at Pine Tree Legal Assistance, I frequently supported survivors in requesting unpaid leave based on current Maine law. They requested this leave in order to attend court dates and receive medical care. Many employers resisted providing that leave, and the current law is invaluable in allowing survivors to exercise their right to take that leave.

I often cite the fact that although approximately 14,000 Mainers experience sexual violence each year, only a few hundred will report this to law enforcement. By supporting survivors with paid safe leave, this Committee will be affirming that we prioritize survivors seeking medical care and

cooperating with law enforcement. You would also be in line with all of the other states who have adopted paid leave, which have all included safe leave as part of their paid leave.¹

The cost of sexual assault is estimated by the CDC as over \$100,000 per survivor.² By passing paid leave with safe leave you will help minimize the cost of sexual violence to individual survivors.

Thank you for your consideration. I 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.³ Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.⁴

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 <https://www.abetterbalance.org/paid-sick-time-laws/>

² <https://www.nsvrc.org/blogs/cost-rape.>

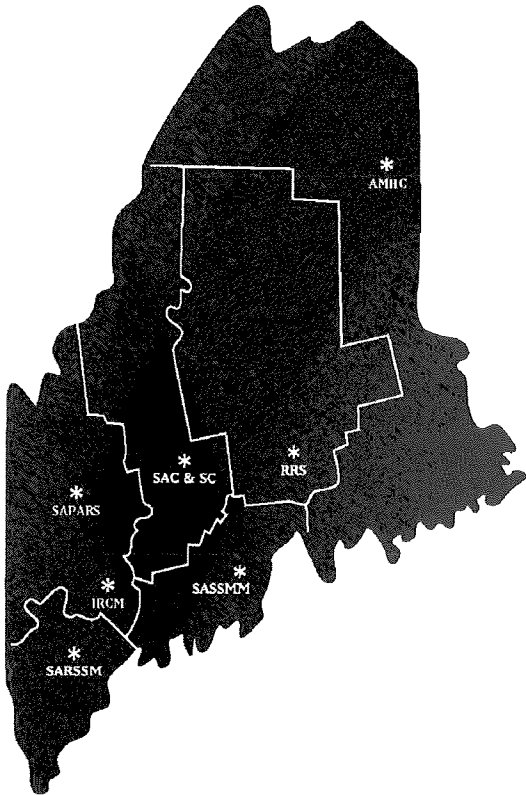
³ Dumont, R. & Shaler, G. (2015). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

⁴ *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 •
amhcsexualassaultservices.org

Immigrant Resource Center of Maine

Serving Androscoggin & Cumberland Counties • ircofmaine.org

Rape Response Services (RRS)

Serving Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties • rronline.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

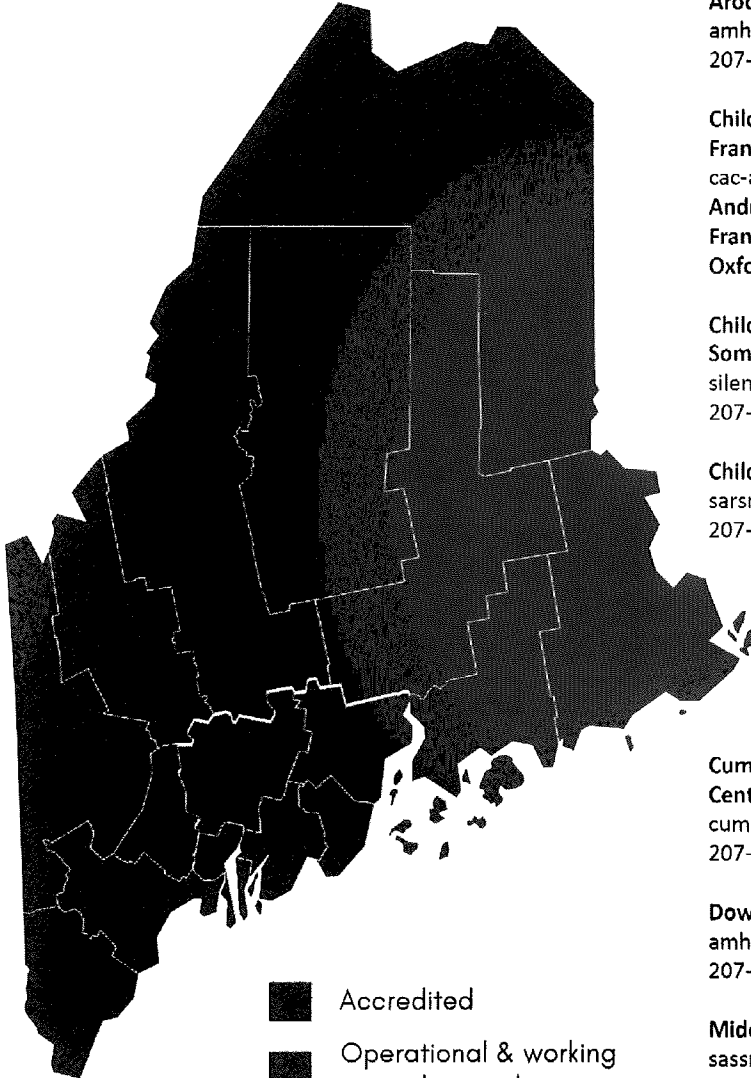
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

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-af0.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
sarshm.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