

# MAINE FAMILY LAW ADVISORY COMMISSION

## Report to Maine Legislature Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary On LD 2084

### “An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes”

#### Introduction

The Maine Family Law Advisory Commission (FLAC) hereby reports to the Maine Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, on LD 2084, “An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes.” For the reasons set forth below, FLAC unanimously supports this bill.

#### Discussion

Since 1984, The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), has provided funding for core services to victims of violent crimes in Maine. If the legislature does not act, VOCA funded victim services in Maine will be reduced by \$5.8 million next year. This will result in a 62% reduction in currently funded core services for victims. Core services include civil and criminal legal services, financial and housing support, community based domestic and sexual violence services, victim witness advocates, children’s advocacy centers, court appointed special advocates for children, and much more.

FLAC is composed of four members of the judiciary, a representative from the Court alternative dispute resolution service, a representative from the Department of Health and Human Services, two members of the family law section of the Maine State Bar Association, a legal services representative, and two public members who have experience providing mental health services. In short, FLAC is a group of experienced family law practitioners who regularly rely on VOCA funded services to support our work. For example, VOCA funding currently supports domestic violence and sexual violence advocates helping victims to file Protection from Abuse cases and enables advocates to support victims throughout the court process. In addition, Pine Tree Legal Assistance and Legal Services for the Elderly rely heavily on VOCA funds to hire staff attorneys to provide civil legal representation in family matters and Protection from Abuse cases. Finally, the Judicial branch program for Court-Appointed Special Advocates (“CASA”) is partially funded by VOCA. The CASA program appoints guardian ad litem (GAL) in child protective cases. In child protective cases, Judges must determine what is in the best interests of the child. CASA GALs help Judges make this determination by gathering facts, conducting interviews, preparing reports, and testifying at hearings.

FLAC supports LD 2084 because drastic cuts to core services such as these will negatively impact the judicial branch, practitioners, advocates, and victims across Maine.

#### Conclusion

For the reasons set forth above, FLAC unanimously recommends that LD 2084 be enacted.

Dated: January 22, 2024

Respectfully submitted:  
Maine Family Law Advisory Commission

Hon. John Martin, District Court Judge (Chair)

Hon. Stephen Nelson, Superior Court Justice

Hon. Steven Chandler, Family Law Magistrate

Hon. Scott Houde, Probate Court Judge

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