

Testimony in Favor of LD 2084

January 23, 2023

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Christie Denzel Anastasia, and I live in Mount Desert.

I am writing to request passage in Maine of LD 2084, with no decrease to the existing budget.

I also advocate, as a recipient of these services, that in fact more funding should be dedicated to this important construct for a state that cares about those most in need.

I live in Hancock County, ME, on Mount Desert Island. I have just barely survived a grueling separation and divorce from the father of my children. I am only around and alive and thriving to be here for my children because of Next Step, a domestic violence project, for residents of Hancock and Washington County.

Victims of Crime are all around you. Most of the people who interacted with me for the three years it took me to legally separate myself from the destruction of a cruel and vindictive man, did not know what I was going through. I was ashamed that I fell prey to a perpetrator. I wanted to hide and be silent. I wanted to deny and pretend it was not happening to me.

I had a therapist that pointed me in the direction of Next Step. I immediately joined a weekly virtual support group. Being with a specialized group facilitator with curriculum geared toward our situation was the leverage for me to get my life back... for me and my children.

I will always think of Next Step as the Life Raft that rescued me from sinking. I am eternally grateful to the staff and the support and the resources. I see the difference every week in the eyes of the women in my support group. We are learning how to take that Next Step. Victims need help to survive and then hopefully thrive.

I literally walked around in the court room of my divorce trial in shoes that were disintegrating. I could barely stand, literally and figuratively. I had a Court Advocate from Next Step witnessing the trial. She gave me the support to tell my truth. Incidentally she also gave me her shoes to wear to finish the trial. Next Step is that foundational.

I ask you to reconsider the priorities of the State of Maine and how we treat our citizens most in need: those enduring sexual and domestic violence. Victims need more than courts can provide. They need support and strength, and resources that can help them summon enough courage to just take that Next Step, whatever it is. Cutting the budget of VOCA, that supports Victims of Crime says Victims don't matter. They do matter. They deserve the right to have support to become whole again.

Very respectfully-



Christie Denzel Anastasia