

Testimony of Amy Deermount
In Support of **LD 2084, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims
of Crime**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
Jan. 23, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Amy Deermount, I am from Farmington, and I am writing in support of LD 2084 and the need for funding to maintain essential victim services in Maine.

I would like to start off by saying this is incredibly nerve-wracking, but when I learned about the funding cuts and what that could mean for me and anyone else that has faced my hardships, not speaking up was not an option.

For a long time, six years to be exact, I lived with abuse by a man who was supposed to love me as my husband. Divorce didn't stop it. I was given the short end of the stick at every turn I reached out for help. I felt like I was broken, and fighting a system not built for my situation. Alone in a state with family too far in distance to help me and living with fear and isolation, I had to rely on the services available to find a way out.

Even with procuring a lawyer, my struggle with needing help to leave my situation was by no means an achievable overnight process. It took me three years, tons of court dates, protection from abuse orders, and every ounce of personal strength. I struggled to find the dedication and time to even begin to put my life back together.

I one hundred percent believe Safe Voices helped me feel safe enough to have a voice. Taking funds away from Safe Voices feels like my voice is being silenced once again. Finally, I was given someone to actually hear me and understand my struggles. Someone to have the compassion and the tools and connections to keep me on my feet.

They were the only option I had to make my transition out of my abusive situation achievable, reliable, and safe. As I see it, they are experts in their field. And I know for a fact that without them, my chances of my mental, physical and emotional recovery would not have been the same.

So this is me sharing how important it is to keep services and programs and help going. Funding keeps people safe, but not just safe, it keeps people able to achieve workable, manageable, restructured lives. I know for myself, the thought of not having programs that have provided so much for me is heartbreaking. It's hard enough to have the strength to say I need help. I can't imagine how things would be if that help was not available.

Helping Safe Voices actually helps real people and real families that depend on the hands that help us.

Safe Voices truly gives a voice to the voiceless and the possibility for success and healing to the broken. I still attend support groups, attend classes, and use the hotline. That support and help is the hand I need to keep the life I fought so hard to put back together.

I don't know any other programs other than Safe Voices that work as hard to care and give support for their clients and change lives. They actually make a difference. They are depended on so much by so many women I have met, for things as small as giving personal care items to regain self-care or clothes for the job you were hoping to get, to as big as providing a place that's safe to keep a roof over our and our children's heads, so we can stay safe off the streets and from more harm from others. They create a way to get out, get away and get aware. Safe Voices needs funding to give us those tools and resources.

Safe Voices helped me heal the broken parts of my heart. They gave me strength when none was left, and hope when no options are available. So many people would ask for help and be able to receive help as long as Safe Voices can be able to provide that. They are a system that truly makes a difference.