

Testimony of Gigi Sweets
In Support of LD 2084, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crime
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
January 10, 2024

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

In 2021, after years of abuse at the hands of my ex-husband, he stole my money, vandalized, and destroyed my home, left me physically broken in chronic pain, and homeless, while caring for our 4-year-old son and facing winter in my car. After receiving several death threats from my ex, I worked with a legal advocate from Partners for Peace for assistance with filing a protection order that was granted to help keep myself and my son safe.

For almost two years now, I have been attending their weekly support group which has been critical in my healing process. After being ripped away from my family and friends, isolated and tucked back into the woods, I finally had people who I could connect with. To hear their stories, and to know that I wasn't the only one to go through this, gave me better perspective of this journey.

The Partners for Peace advocate/facilitator of these meetings connected me with other people in the organization, who were able to help my son live in their transitional housing program at no cost until I was able to afford it. Finally, we were safe. We were warm. We could breathe.

Without Partners for Peace and all the assistance/support that they have provided, I truly believe that my son and I would've died in the woods of Dexter, Maine. I owe them our lives. The idea that a funding cut would reduce their ability to help others in similar situations terrifies me. I am just one of nearly 2000 people they helped in 2022. I still utilize their services today. Without the ongoing utilization, my mental state through this transition would have suffered greatly and affected my son potentially worse-so. Imagine what the lives of those helped would look like had Partners for Peace not been able to assist them... not because of a lack of desire, effort, and most importantly, NEED, but because they simply didn't have the budget? How much are those lives worth to you?