

Testimony of Chief Charles Rumsey  
In Support of LD 2064, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crime  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
Tuesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Charles Rumsey. I serve as Chief of the Cumberland Police Department, and chair of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association's Legislative Committee. I'm here today to express both my personal support, and the support of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association for LD 2084 and the need to fund essential victim services in Maine.

Throughout my policing career, I have often expressed my belief that the work of victim services providers is at least as brave and heroic as that of my fellow officers. Many times, I have witnessed advocates providing support to the survivors of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and other violent crimes – literally holding their hands as the survivor tries to make sense of the senseless. During my time as an investigator, advocates were crucial to my work. As I did my best to build a case that could be successfully prosecuted, advocates helped explain the criminal justice system to the survivor in a way that they could understand. This understanding kept survivors engaged and avoided them becoming confused at the complexity of the system or frustrated by inherent delays. The reassurance and support of advocates I worked with helped instill the confidence needed by survivors to testify against their abuser. Confusion, fear, and frustration can all lead to a victim disengaging from the system, resulting in failed prosecution and lack of offender accountability. I truly believe that a strong network of victim service providers is vital and leads to better outcomes for survivors and for our communities.

A 60% cut in funding for Maine's victim services providers would be a disaster for our community's ability to support crime victims.

Law Enforcement Agencies do not have their own victim services resources. When officers have completed their on-scene response, a victim services response is what's needed in the immediate aftermath. We rely on Maine's victim services network to step in and help crime victims get the information they need and to address their safety needs.

In domestic violence cases in particular, the availability of community advocates 24/7 is essential. Even when we make an arrest, a victim often has urgent safety concerns and a need for information about what to expect next.

The availability of victim services in our communities allows Maine's law enforcement officers to move on to the next case having some level of assurance that there are resources to make sure the crime victim has what they need to take whatever next steps are necessary.

If we were to lose the availability to connect victims to 24 hour hotlines, those crisis calls would be displaced to other crisis responders; Maine's law enforcement are already understaffed and can't afford to fill that gap.

The ability of victim services providers to collaborate as a network and to include law enforcement in that collaboration has made the entire community's response more effective and makes it so that there's no wrong door for a crime victim to get the support and response they need.

Our partnership with domestic violence advocates helps us identify where our response is working well and what things we could be doing to better support victims in our response.

On behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association and the Cumberland Police Department, I urge you to pass LD 2084, so that our heroic, dedicated victim services professionals can continue the important work they are doing in all of our communities. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.