

LD 2290 An Act to Correct Inconsistencies, Conflicts and Errors in the Laws of Maine.
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
Public Hearing Date: April 10, 2024
Testimony in Support of LD 2290

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Christina Lowery, and I reside in Windham, Maine. I submit this testimony in support of LD 2290.

I am the mother of an amazing, courageous 8 year old, who is on the precipice of testifying. For her, this process is incredibly anxiety provoking, and requires her to be in a courtroom and share traumatic experiences in front of a room full of people she doesn't know, and particularly to share space with her abuser.

Almost three years ago a very brave 6 year old disclosed her abuse to me. Two days later she participated in a forensic interview, and took yet another brave step by sharing her story with a complete stranger. That video is 48 minutes of a little girl who had just turned six, sharing her experience with a trained forensic interviewer.

Since then, the legal process has been a roller coaster with a myriad of delays and motions. A snow storm last February set the case back six months. Almost three years after her disclosure, the case is still pending. In the meantime, she has done much of her own healing through trauma informed therapy. That said, knowing she'll need to testify and to step up in a very difficult way yet again has required a lot from her.

A little over a month ago we let our daughter know she'd be testifying. The judge in the case heard from both the defense and prosecution about the application of LD 765, and he granted it. My girl was brave yet again - going to the courtroom to see what it would be like, and hearing from the state's attorneys how the questioning from both sides would occur.

She was prepared to testify, and took a lot of solace in knowing the video would be played and she wouldn't have to say many of the words out loud - wouldn't have to go through her abuse detail by detail. Then, just four days before she was supposed to testify, the judge changed his mind. As the law wasn't explicit in including pending cases, he couldn't include the video. Disheartening is not an adequate word for what we all felt - knowing that forensic interviews should be used, and yet the help we needed was just out of reach.

You all have already done something wonderful in passing LD 765. In recognizing that having anyone, let alone a child, to share their sexual abuse over and over again is retraumatizing. Imagine being 8 years old, and walking into a room full of strangers, a couple of loved ones, and your abuser, and share traumatizing, private moments. You all have already seen that there is a way to mitigate some of that discomfort and anxiety.

What we are asking is that you extend that care to the children most immediately impacted by this change. There are children involved in pending cases, my daughter included, who also need that care and protection. Who have already participated in forensic interviews with trained interviewers, and deserve to not have to share in more of their trauma than needed. We have a wonderful tool - please help it be shared.

This law in general is a tremendous step toward making the process more victim centered. **Start now.** Our journey has been three years in the making, and there are other children in the same boat. Let this law help children **right now** by allowing it to apply to pending cases.

For these reasons, I am in support of LD 2290 as emergency legislation.

Regards,
Christina Lowery