

mecasa

MAINE COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

March 5, 2025

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs:

My name is Elizabeth Ward Saxl, and I am submitting testimony today on behalf of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA), the organization which represents and serves Maine's sexual violence prevention and response programs as well as Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers. MECASA initiates and advocates for victim-centered public policy; provides expert training, technical assistance, and resources for providers and partners; and funds the service providers in your communities.

MECASA is here today in support of LD 665, "An Act Regarding the Use of Military Protective Orders in Protection from Abuse and Protection from Harassment Proceedings." Thank you to Rep. Rielly for sponsoring this legislation.

On a national level, women in the military experience sexual harassment at a rate of 1 in 4 and sexual assault at a rate of 1 in 16, and men in the military experience sexual harassment at a rate of 1 in 16 and sexual assault at a rate of 1 in 143.¹ National rates of reported sexual harassment and sexual assault within the National Guard have been rising over the past 10 years.² Only about a third of victims report their assault and many instances happen outside of a military installment leading to more complex jurisdictional and reporting issues.³

Maine has been discussing and taking steps to address the rates of sexual violence within the Maine National Guard over the past several years. Reports of sexual violence against National Guard members often require the Guard to coordinate with several civilian side processes, as most of these incidents are investigated by local law enforcement. In addition, many National Guard

¹ See https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1318-1.html

² See <https://democrats-armedservices.house.gov/2022/1/subcommittee-on-military-personnel-hearing-jurisdiction-investigation-and-prosecution-of-sexual-assault-and-harassment-in-the-national-guard>

³ *Id.*

members who experience sexual violence may seek and receive a Protection from Abuse order in addition or instead of a military protection order because they need protection in their home, community, and at their regular, non-Guard place of work.

For all military members who are living and working in Maine, we must make the process of coordinating a military protection order with a Protection from Abuse order as seamless as possible. This would allow any military survivor of sexual harm to get full protection in all the places they need it without having to jump through unnecessary hoops.

This bill achieves this goal by streamlining the Maine court's ability to access and consider a military protection order when making decisions in a Protection from Abuse or Protection from Harassment matter.

For these reasons, we support the bill, and ask you to pass it – as amended by the sponsor's amendment presented today.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope you will support LD 665 and would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

About Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers

One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.⁴ Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.⁵

Maine's sexual violence service providers provide free and confidential services across the state to victims/survivors of sexual harassment and sexual assault and those close to them, as well as to individuals who wish to increase their understanding of the issues. Just some of the services include a 24-hour statewide sexual assault helpline, crisis intervention and information, support groups, in-person accompaniment and advocacy through the medical and legal systems, and school- and community-based prevention education. Services are provided for a victim/survivor regardless of when they experienced sexual violence, and regardless of what type of sexual violence they experienced. Types of sexual violence include, but are not limited to, sexual harassment and gender-based bullying, child sexual abuse, elder sexual abuse, stalking, sex trafficking, and sexual violence within an intimate partner relationship.

⁴ Dumont, R. & Shaler, G. (2015). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

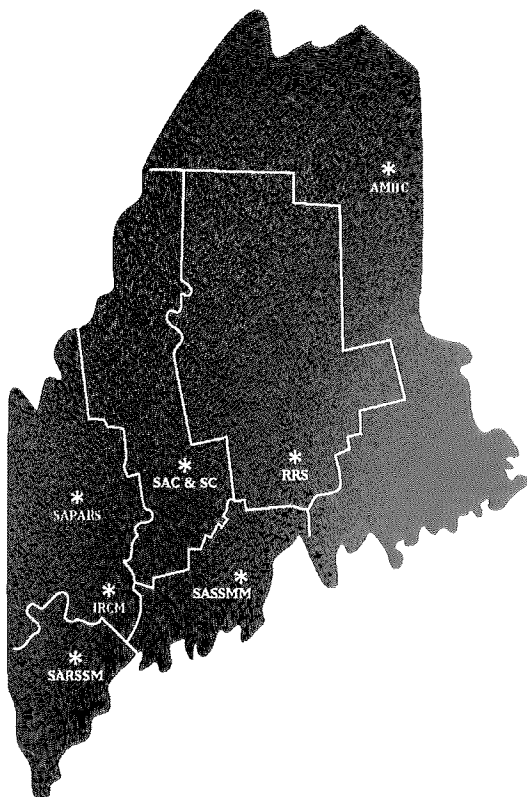
⁵ *Ibid.*

24/7 Confidential
Maine Sexual Assault Helpline: 1-800-871-7741

mecasa

**MAINE COALITION AGAINST
SEXUAL ASSAULT**

info@mecasa.org | mecasa.org
207-626-0034



**STATEWIDE
SEXUAL ASSAULT HELPLINE
1-800-871-7741**

Free. Private. 24/7.

MAINE'S SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTERS

AMHC Sexual Assault Services (AMHC)

Serving Aroostook, Hancock, & Washington Counties •
amhosexualassaultservices.org

Immigrant Resource Center of Maine

Serving Androscoggin & Cumberland Counties • ircofmaine.org

Rape Response Services (RRS)

Serving Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties • rrsonline.org

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Services (SAPARS)

Serving Androscoggin, Oxford & Franklin Counties and the towns of
Bridgton & Harrison • sapars.org

Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Center (SAC & SC)

Serving Kennebec & Somerset Counties • silentnomore.org

Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM)

Serving Cumberland & York Counties • sarsonline.org

Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM)

Serving Eastern Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Knox, Waldo & Lincoln
Counties • sassmm.org

MORE SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES

Maine TransNet • mainetrans.net • info@mainetransnet.org

Wabanaki Women's Coalition • wabanakiwomenscoalition.org
207-763-3478

Aroostook Band of Micmacs, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-551-3639

Houlton Band of Maliseets, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-532-6401

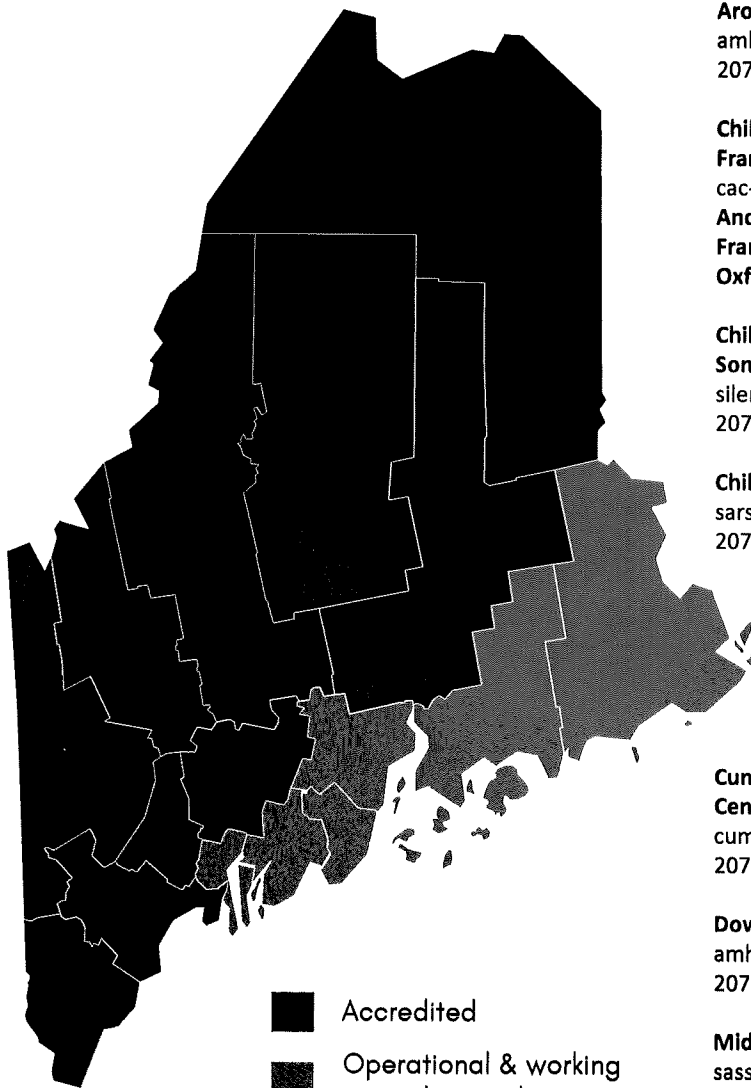
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations • 1-877-853-2613

Penobscot Indian Nation, Domestic & Sexual Violence
Advocacy Center • 207-631-4886



Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers



- Accredited
- Operational & working toward accreditation

Aroostook County Children's Advocacy Center
amhcsas.org
207-472-6134

Children's Advocacy Center of Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford Counties
cac-afo.org
Androscoggin: 207-784-0436
Franklin: 207-778-9777
Oxford: 207-739-1228

Children's Advocacy Center of Kennebec & Somerset Counties
silentnomore.org/about-our-cac
207-861-4491

Children's Advocacy Center of York County
sarsmm.org
207-459-2380

Cumberland County Children's Advocacy Center
cumberlandcountycac.org
207-879-6160

Downeast Children's Advocacy Center
amhcsas.org
207-255-3687

Midcoast Children's Advocacy Center
sassmm.org
207-522-7162

Penquis Children's Advocacy Center
penquiscac.org
207-974-2469