

Testimony of Krissy Beaton
In Support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
March 19, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Krissy Beaton, I am from Aroostook County, and I am writing to share why support for this critical funding is so important.

In the fall of 2002, during my college years, I met the individual who became my abuser. Earlier that year, in January, I had been sexually assaulted, which led to the end of my high school sweetheart relationship. Navigating adulthood with diminished self-esteem and misplaced self-blame, I entered into a new relationship that quickly became serious. Unfortunately, just a month in, he strangled me—a harbinger of the abuse to come.

By winter break of 2002, his physical and emotional abuse became blatant, even in public settings. An incident that stands out is when I complimented someone's driving during a snowstorm; he responded by hitting me multiple times in the back seat of their car. His control led me to fear doing anything without him, resulting in job losses, failed classes, and estranged friendships.

In May 2003, we moved into a small off-campus apartment. One evening, enraged at someone, he planned to vandalize their vehicle on campus. When I criticized this plan, he assaulted me—hitting, shaking, and slamming me into walls. He proceeded with his vandalism while I sought refuge with a friend. The next morning, his verbal abuse escalated, culminating in him shoving me into a metal radiator, causing bruised ribs and back injury. Grabbing a steak knife, he began destroying my belongings, including puncturing our air mattress. The police were called—either by a neighbor or my mother, whom he had angrily contacted. They documented my injuries and arrested him on two counts of assault. This incident marked my first contact with the Hope and Justice Project.

I returned to my hometown and reached out to their hotline. An advocate met me at the courthouse, assisting in filing a protection from abuse order. The temporary order was granted, and with my advocate's support, I reported subsequent violations to law enforcement. He incessantly called, had acquaintances monitor me despite the distance, and harassed my

friends. Then, unexpectedly, he apologized—a first. Hoping for change, I reconciled, dismissed the order, and distanced myself from support systems, unwilling to accept that I deserved better.

He enrolled in a Batterer's Intervention program but twisted the teachings to label me as the abuser. Post-class nights became ordeals of beatings, hair-pulling, and strangulation, accompanied by accusations of my purported abusiveness. I was coerced into funding his classes, as he was required to take them because of me. By October 2003, I was pregnant with our first child.

He joined the Navy, and after his dishonorable discharge, moved into my parents' home with our daughter and me. While physical abuse lessened due to my parents' presence, his relentless verbal assaults persisted. He forced me to quit my job, only to berate me later for not contributing financially.

In 2008, I suffered a retinal detachment—a consequence of a pre-existing condition exacerbated by years of abuse—resulting in vision loss in one eye. He cruelly claimed no one would love me due to my appearance and that I was fortunate to have him. I believed him.

By 2012, his behavior became unbearable. We had left my parents' home, welcomed another child, and purchased a new house. After a work injury, he was prescribed opiates, intensifying his abusive episodes. He falsely reported me to the police multiple times, portraying himself as the victim. During a vacation, he drove recklessly at 90 mph from Houlton to Gorham, screaming, punching the car interior, and threatening to crash. I conceived our third child.

The final physical assault occurred on August 10-11, 2012. Aware of my pregnancy, he repeatedly beat and strangled me, leading to his arrest for disorderly conduct. The police referred me to the Hope and Justice Project. I scheduled a meeting, and an advocate assisted in filing a protection from abuse order, which was temporarily granted for my children and me. She prepared me for the hearing, stood by me as I testified in a crowded courtroom, shielded me from his intimidation, and coordinated with the Court Marshal for safety. When the court provided me possession of our house, he reacted violently, requiring the marshal to restrain him, allowing my advocate to safely usher me outside of the courtroom.

Post-hearing, my advocate checked on my well-being, guided me through divorce proceedings, and connected me to financial assistance like TANF. She referred me to a divorce attorney experienced in domestic violence cases, providing invaluable understanding without judgment. I returned to school through the Parents as Scholars program. However, just before my final year of Social Work classes, the divorce was finalized, and I was granted child support. Despite not receiving payments, I was terminated from TANF and Parents as Scholars, jeopardizing my education and future livelihood. With no remaining options for student loans or financial aid, the Hope and Justice Project referred me to the Career Center, which assisted me with transportation costs. My sister discovered the Women's Independence Scholarship Program, which covered tuition and supplies. I applied and they were able to provide me with a scholarship. However, I needed a domestic violence resource center to manage the funds. The Hope and Justice Project willingly took on this responsibility. Without their help, I would not be the person I am today.

Continued funding for these services is not just beneficial—it is essential. It ensures that individuals like me have access to the resources and support necessary to escape abusive situations and rebuild their lives. I urge you to recognize the life-saving impact of the Hope and Justice Project and similar organizations across Maine. Your support and funding are crucial in the fight against domestic violence and in fostering a safer, healthier community for all.