

Testimony in Support of LD 875

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Julia Neher and I live in Rockland Maine. I am testifying in support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence.

I am both a survivor of domestic violence and a professional working in the field to support others on their journey to safety and healing. I am here today to emphasize the critical need for continued and increased funding for The Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV) and its affiliated programs.

Without the support of New Hope Midcoast and MCEDV-funded services, I truly believe my story—and the story of my two children—could have ended in devastation. When law enforcement was unable to help us, these advocates stepped in. We faced homelessness in the middle of winter while actively fleeing domestic violence and struggling against financial barriers caused by that abuse. We had nowhere to go. It was New Hope Midcoast and then MCEDV-funded programs that made it possible for my children and me to find safety.

In November 2024, New Hope provided shelter services, access to safe and reliable transportation, legal aid, and, most importantly, unwavering advocacy, love, and compassion during a time when life felt impossible. These resources weren't just about financial support—they were about survival, stability, and the chance to rebuild. Because of New Hope Midcoast and MCEDV, my children and I are now safely housed, and I am able to move forward with hope instead of fear.

In today's world, where division often seems to overshadow unity, Domestic Violence Resource Centers represent what it truly means to be a community. The advocates in these programs don't just see people in crisis—they see their potential, their strength, and the light within them, even when they can't see it themselves. I am living proof of the profound impact these services have on survivors, and I am just one of so many who rely on these programs to escape abuse, regain stability, and heal.

Funding for Domestic Violence Resource Centers is not just a budgetary decision—it is a matter of life and death for survivors and their children. I urge you to prioritize this funding so that no survivor is left without a place to turn. Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to protecting those in need.

Respectfully,

Julia Neher

Rockland Maine