

Testimony of Kayli Farrar

**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 Kayli Farrar, I live in Aroostook County and I am writing to share why support for this critical funding is so important.

At one point in my life I found myself entering a courtroom by myself filled with people I knew and didn't know, scanning the crowd to see my then husband sitting on the opposite side of the room from me. I had taken the courage to file for an order of temporary protection from him, on behalf of myself and our children. I hadn't been face to face with him in a while, and now seeing him sent many emotions running through me. From being furious with him, to still being in love with this man and angry that I was in the position to have to be sitting there.

After speaking with the judge and my husband giving his testimony I was riddled with even more feelings. Upon leaving the courtroom I was met by a friendly face who asked if I would like to join her in a side room to take a breath after a very emotional few moments that she witnessed in that courtroom. I came to learn after getting my bearings that she worked at the local Hope and Justice Project in town. It was nice at a time of great distress in my life to have those few moments to gather my bearings and speak with someone who was there to lend an ear with no judgment. This was my first experience many years ago with this program.

More recently I was involved in what many would call a mothers worst nightmare and unfortunately had my children removed from my home from witnessing Domestic Violence between my husband and myself; the same man that many years prior I had taken the protective order against during my first experience with Hope and Justice. During this time I didn't trust anyone or anything that any person had to say. I was first introduced to Hope and Justice Project's DV/CPS Liaison via telephone/video call during a team meeting with Department of Human Services CPS, I would have to say I immediately wanted nothing to do with her. However, as time went on and through conversations with the advocate, she slowly at my own pace worked with me and was willing to lend a listening ear and in great detail explain

to me and show me through her actions that she was not on “CPS’s side” she was there to fully support me, in a long drawn out process to be reunited with my children.

I went through the struggle of dealing with Child Protective Services for over 12 months fighting to get my children returned to me. During that time whenever I needed her for any type of support even if it was to vent my feelings, about how unfair I felt I was being treated as though I was the perpetrator. As my beliefs changed to being the “victim” of my own demise, and struggling with my children being the “victims” of my decision to return to a man that we all believed loved us and wouldn’t do anything again to put us in a bad situation. Hope and Justice Project’s advocate was there to stand beside me and help me through all those emotions and help me broaden my knowledge of Domestic Violence through conversations and a Domestic Violence course that she teaches through Hope and Justice Project.

The Hope and Justice Domestic Violence course was a great sense of support for myself, as not only did I get to go and learn more about how to deal with the emotional trauma that comes from being in that type of relationship, I also was able to share and hear stories from other survivors who also found themselves in the same place; along with dealing with a Child Protective Case. We also were given the knowledge to know how to spot major red flags, to take with us when we left; to hopefully be able to lessen the chance of finding ourselves in another Domestically Violent relationship moving forward.

The advocate became so much more to me than just another person that I had to deal with during a traumatic experience in my life; she became a great support for me mentally, emotionally and educationally. Never once did she tell me I had to do anything, she was there to support me at whatever stage I was at and that any decision I made was my own and one of which I wanted to make.

She was there to remind me when I was at my lowest and felt that I just couldn’t go on; to keep pushing me to go forward, as she took the time to actually get to know me. I never felt as though I was just a number in her book of clients and she always knew how to keep me moving forward in a positive way.

The advocate would take the time to meet with me prior to all my meetings with the department so I could gather my thoughts and emotions before speaking to my caseworker. Meeting with my caseworker was always a time of high anxiety for me. The advocate was quick to see this and gave me the opportunity to have this time with her to review what I wanted to speak about and remind me that I was on the right track and eventually the department would also be able to see that.

One big thing during my case was that the department wanted me to divorce my husband, The advocate was quick to respond to me during these times and support me through the many emotions that surrounded that decision. And was there to give me the guidance that Hope and Justice had the resources if needed to complete the paperwork that was necessary to accomplish this. Even though I was able to complete the paperwork, another staff member was very willing to review and make the necessary copies that I needed for this process. She also introduced me to another member who was able to notarize the paperwork, so I didn't have to go through the process of finding a notary on top of everything else I was going through.

Throughout this process she educated me on many other services that are available through Hope and Justice from shelter, bill stipends, support, court advocacy, all the way down to basic needs from food to clothing. During my time of working with the advocate my eyes were definitely opened to how much more Hope and Justice has to offer our community and the people in it. From what I personally had always seen them as, which was just an organization that was there to speak to survivors of Domestic Violence and educate the community. This program is so much more and so important to the people of Aroostook County, and losing this program as well as the support of someone like Hope and Justice Project's advocate for people like me that find themselves at the mercy of Child Protective Services, would be a great disaster especially for many people who are not fortunate enough to have a family support system.