

Senator Ingwersen, Representatives Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Christie Davis. Due to safety concerns, I am unable to disclose my town of residence. I am here today to testify in support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence.

I was in an abusive marriage for 20 years, married to a former Army Ranger instructor. The marriage was filled with sporadic highs and lows, constant walking on eggshells, explosions of rage consisting of both extreme verbal and physical abuse. The last two years were particularly harrowing, as paranoia consumed my husband and the situation became extremely dangerous. I discovered hidden cameras in my house and bedroom, hidden phone lines from his attempts to listen to my calls, and a tracking device in my car. During one police intervention, I was given a lethality assessment, resulting in a score of 97 out of 100 points.

I had felt trapped for years. Trapped by finances knowing I could not afford to support four children on my own. I also was trapped by shame, I could not bear to admit to anyone the things that had been taking place in my outwardly picture-perfect home. Finally in 2012, after my two oldest children left, I immediately took my two youngest children, my pets, everything that I could cram into a Uhaul and fled our home of 18 years in New Hampshire. We moved to Kennebunk without telling anyone where we were going hoping to remain safe. It took my now former husband less than 8 weeks to find us.

I lost my source of income as an interior designer and struggled financially, barely able to keep a roof over our head and food on the table. During this time I began going to a support group with Caring Unlimited in York County, which was invaluable to my recovery. I met many women going through the same struggles and heard countless tragic stories of abuse, financial despair, and failures by the legal system. One thing that stuck with me was the stories of women and children living in transitional and emergency shelters, all hoping for a safe place to start over.

Fast forward to 2021, I had finally achieved stability. I had previously volunteered for almost 5 years with Through These Doors in Cumberland County and also had begun looking to purchase a home. However, this did not turn out as I dreamed with me moving out of a rental and into my own home. What transpired was me recalling those stories of women and children in shelters, then buying a multifamily, and working with Caring Unlimited, getting moms and kiddos out of their shelter; the first family just 2 ½ weeks before Christmas.

My perspective on the critical need to fund essential DV services, such as those provided by Caring Unlimited and Through These Doors, comes from personal

experience. I have known the danger, despair, fear, and financial strain caused by domestic violence firsthand. I have also felt the hope that comes when someone reassures you that everything will be alright. I remember the relief I felt when Caring Unlimited connected me with a partnering mechanic, allowing me to get a discounted set of tires for my car. I have now been on the other side, answering emergency hotline calls and offering that same voice of understanding and support in safety planning to others. I have witnessed the profound relief on a mother's face as she sees the safe space where she and her children will be moving.

I am convinced that our collective efforts can significantly impact the lives of women and children escaping domestic violence, if we commit to supporting them together. I hope my actions will speak louder than my words.