

Testimony of Michael Alteri in support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence - March 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Michael Alteri and I write on behalf of Next Step Domestic Violence Project, serving Hancock and Washington counties. I urge your support for this critical funding to sustain essential services for survivors of domestic violence.

I serve as a group facilitator for the Batterers Intervention Program in Washington County. Having performed this work now for nearly three years, I have learned how interconnected all aspects of Domestic Violence Prevention are.

1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men have experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence or stalking by an intimate partner. Advocates from the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence network worked with 12,385 people statewide that were directly experiencing abuse and violence last year alone.

Of those served in 2024, 2,418 people received housing help, including emergency sheltering, transitional support, housing navigation and other help.

My purpose is not to bore you with statistics, but to illustrate how large and interconnected the solutions to domestic violence are. If victims have no safe haven and batterers have no education or rehabilitation, the cycle continues.

Although perpetrators are punished by the court system, there still needs to be education, oversight and support systems to try and change behaviors. Along with these systems, there needs to be safe havens and facilities that serve the victims of domestic abuse.

If victims of domestic violence and abuse don't feel that they have a safe haven to retreat to or don't feel supported, they are many times forced to stay in an untenable and potentially dangerous situation with the abuser. Although there are many incidences of domestic violence and abuse in our state as I have referenced above, many go unreported. The need, I fear, is much greater than we have the current capacity to service.

As you would expect, many of these incidents have children present if not involved. These children need safe havens, counseling and other services as much if not more than the primary victim of the abuse.

The services that organizations like Next Step Domestic Violence Project provide are critically needed. Sadly, as costs rise in general for the population, the costs of providing potentially life saving services for victims of domestic violence are rising as well. More expensive services, means fewer people served and also less effective services due to staffing and facility shortages.

I urge you to seriously consider these facts and those of other testimonials and ensure that the biennial budget reflects the urgent need for these life saving resources.

Thank you for your time and consideration.