

Testimony of Marjorie Apsega
In Support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence
March 19, 2025

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

On May 8, 2024, my husband assaulted me. He got angry with me because I told him that something he said made me sad. He threw me around like a rag doll and I was covered in 25-35 bruises. I attempted to call the police for help, but he ripped my phone out of my hands and crushed it. I was scared. I was confused. This was my husband. The person who was supposed to protect me, yet he has hurt me physically and emotionally more than any human being on this planet. I still have one physical memory of the attack but the emotional pain and memories, those haunt me minute by minute of every single day. I pray none of you sitting here, making the decision whether or not these services get the funding they need, ever have to deal with domestic violence either directly or indirectly. If you do, you are going to be thankful these services exist. I am here today because of the support of these services. They have given me a voice, strength, and have helped me understand this isn't my fault.

My husband is a 6th degree black belt, teaches woman's self-defense and has 2 Karate Schools. He is loved by so many people in our community. So, I kept quiet. I felt ashamed. This had to be my fault somehow. I waited weeks to report the assault. I waited days to call a DV crisis line. When I did, a man answered. I didn't want to talk to a man. A "man" had attacked and assaulted me just 8 days before. But this man was kind. He was clearly trained well to be a support to men and women who have been assaulted or are experiencing domestic violence. Because of the kindness of this man, I was able to feel comfortable calling again. And again. And again. And again. No matter what time of day, day of the week, they are always there. Supporting men and women of Maine who just don't feel like they have anyone else. I am a well-educated woman, who owned her own business and am fairly confident, and I struggled with reaching out for help the first time. I cannot imagine what women who are isolated, have no self-esteem and limited resources are going through. It takes IMMENSE strength to utilize these resources and they are so incredibly needed for this State. Women and children are dying because of Domestic Violence.

My husband threw me around like a rag doll. I am 5 foot 2 inches tall and weigh 115 at most. He is 6 foot and 250 pounds. You see where I am going with this. These services are so very vital for our State. In 2020, our entire State shut down due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Domestic violence has been a pandemic for over 20 years. But this pandemic doesn't have a vaccine. When Angus King

was governor, he noted Domestic violence was a major problem in the state of Maine and that “major problem” still exists.

This attack has had a significant impact on mine and my children's life. My youngest boy, 16, now protects his mother like I should be protecting him. But I can't. I live in survival mode. Constantly looking over my shoulder, waiting for someone to come up behind me and throw me into a wall, just like what happened on May 8th. I don't go in public alone anymore. I live life more cautiously which isn't who I am.

I wanted to stand before you in person today. I wanted you to see my face. I wanted you to hear my voice and hear the inflection and tone you won't get from this written testimony. The past 10 months have been a living hell. But Partners for Peace has been there every step of the way. They supported me while I sat on the stand in court for almost 2 hours and told my story. I was grilled by his attorney, trying to make it look like I was lying. When I felt like I had no strength, there were so many supportive people from Partners for Peace silently cheering me on. I was granted a 2-year protection order with findings of abuse. Finally, validation that what he did to me was wrong. But how awful is that? Being validated that you were abused. No one should have to have that validation. As I write this, tears are streaming down my face. Tears of sadness and joy. Sadness that I have to put into words what happened to me and that this is even a topic of discussion. Joy that I am here to tell my story and have the strength to stand up for others. Maine needs this funding. It is critical to the lives of our residents, men, women, and children. They all matter. Do the right thing. Make the right choice.