

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

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Sharon Stacey from Yarmouth, Me. This testimony is to support the Act to Fund Essential Services for Domestic Violence Victims.

I am a 15 year survivor of domestic violence.

I reached out to Safe Voices because our counselors couldn't help us but told me where to go get help. Scared and alone with threats in every direction, I walked through those doors and talked to an advocate. Domestic Violence has many faceted issues with no straightforward answers, and no one understood. Always fearful for our safety, I was conditioned not to trust DHHS even though they were pivotal in making sure we could come out of this, but they also got me closest to being unalive'd. They help children be safe. I had to fend for myself. I stood between my abuser and the children. If I leave, it's just an abuser with a child. I stayed. DHHS claimed the kids were harmed emotionally by his abuse of me and they removed them. I went into hiding. 15 years and I still breakdown even though it was not permanent. The intent was there by some to make that so.

Abused people are conditioned to feel at fault and you are worthless. My kids are my everything and I only wanted to be safe with them again, but I didn't know if I was worth the fight. So, I'm alone, in constant fear, and had only a dark void ahead of me. It was almost my ending. I had a plan in place with letters written for my kids to be given at a later date.

What changed? Having Safe Voices changed me.

I had a court advocate to stand by me in court when I had to stand less than 6 feet away from a man who shattered my life. 95% of the time I was alone, but my advocate was there. Those days of icy dread, fear and nausea, but someone was there to have my back and talk me down from the sickening adrenaline after.

In the classes that Safe Voices has, they helped me learn how to never put myself in that same position again. Red flags, etc. This was pivotal in my future ability to I trust myself with my own decisions.

Most important is the support group itself. A place to go weekly with people in the same or similar situation. An advocate would have us congregate, start an activity and/or food and lead a topic to discuss. We had a safe locked space where I could tell my pain to a room of understanding women. They let me be heard with a nod, tears, hugs or a gentle hand on my shoulder. Much recognition and sharing of their own similar stories. I was normal to them. It helped build me back up.

We Learned that what we were taught about ourselves while we were in our relationships was not true. It takes years for that to sink into us even with verbal reminders to each other when we are weak and need to be reminded of our strengths. Here, I was not alone.

Our problems changed daily, and these women pivoted with me. New ideas, support, or resources to seek out. They gave me answers to the many faceted questions needed answered. With safe

voices, I made it. My children made it and are now grown adults. Years of healing my brain and body from Allostatic Overload and I went back to work. I now nurse your mothers, fathers, and maybe even you. I would not be here to do that without Safe Voices. This really matters.

Thank you for your time.