

Testimony in Support of LD 875

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Carrie Clark, I live in Downeast, Maine and I am testifying in support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence.

When it comes to Domestic Violence, I *know* that Prevention work is crucial because, as a Prevention Educator with NextStep Domestic Violence Project, when I'm in a classroom full of young people, I am being asked for Crisis resources by 11-year olds. I am being asked by teenagers how they can stop the fights at home, which is not their responsibility. I am seeing the realization on their faces, when we talk about the ways that no one deserves to be treated – because they *are* experiencing these things. No one is born knowing what bullying, dating violence, or domestic violence look like. Our workshops show students how to recognize harm, how to build relationships based on equality rather than power and control, and *how* to get help and cope in healthy ways when abuse is happening. Not only are we normalizing discussions around these topics, but we are showing these young people that if they are experiencing things like Dating Violence, it's never their fault, and they're never alone. No one did that for me, and if we want a future without Domestic Violence, then we need to make Prevention and Education around Domestic Violence a priority.

One of the first things we do with high school students, is look at the Teen Power and Control Wheel, and identify what abuse looks like. They all get a copy, and we talk about it as a group. Sometimes the students keep these, and sometimes they get left behind at their desks, and we collect them to re-distribute. This one was left behind by a student last year. When I collected the wheels, and my eyes fell on the notes this student made on the sides, I froze. "Mason calls, texts me all the time", "When I say I'm going out he gets worried and begs me not to go", "What if you and your partner (do) like half the stuff on this wheel"

I'm here today on behalf of the survivors we work with, and for the young people I get to connect with in classrooms. I'm also here on behalf of my younger self. If someone had come into my classroom and told me that no one should ever make me feel so small, and that if someone was making me feel like I was crazy for being upset over their mistreatment of me - it wasn't my fault and there was support I could reach out for, I might have saved myself years of pain - wondering what I had done to deserve being treated like my thoughts and feelings didn't matter. Like I didn't matter. Maybe if someone had showed me that the absence of physical bruises didn't mean that the emotional scars weren't just as harmful, I could have found my voice much sooner. Domestic Violence Prevention work helps give a voice to those who don't yet know they have one. Thank you for your time.