

Good morning, Representatives,

My name is Jim Coelho, and I live in Sanford. I am here before you today as a member of the community and as a domestic violence advocate with Caring Unlimited.

We are here today to discuss a crisis that shatters lives, families, communities – we know it as domestic violence. It is a shadow that lurks in homes across every demographic, a silent epidemic that demands our urgent attention. We cannot in good conscience turn a blind eye to the suffering that occurs behind closed doors.

For too long, domestic violence has been relegated to the margins, whispered about in hushed tones, or dismissed as a “private matter.” It is not private, it is a public health crisis, a societal failure, and a moral imperative. The most effective tool we have to combat this crisis is adequate and consistent funding for domestic violence programs.

Why is this funding crucial? Because these programs are lifelines. They are the difference between despair and hope, between survival and tragedy.

Funding provides safe havens. Shelters offer immediate refuge for victims fleeing abuse, a place where they can find physical safety and emotional support. These are not luxuries, they are necessities. Without them, victims are often forced to return to their abusers, trapped in a cycle of violence.

Funding supports vital services. Crisis hotlines, counseling, and legal advocacy to empower survivors to rebuild their lives. These programs provide the tools and resources necessary to navigate the complex challenges of escaping abuse, obtaining restraining orders, and securing financial independence. Imagine the courage it takes to break free; then imagine doing it without any support.

Funding provides for prevention efforts, educational programs, community outreach, and training for professionals which are essential for changing societal attitudes and breaking the cycle of violence.

Funding allows for critical research and data collection. We need to understand the root causes of domestic violence, identify effective interventions, and track the progress of our efforts.

Some may argue that funding for domestic violence programs is a drain on resources. I argue that it is an investment in our communities, in our families, and in our future. The cost of inaction far outweighs the cost of investment. The trauma inflicted by domestic violence ripples through generations, impacting children, families, and society as a whole.

Let me be clear, domestic violence is not inevitable. It is not an unsolvable problem. With adequate funding and unwavering commitment, we can create a society where everyone feels safe, respected, and empowered.

Testimony In Support of LD 875

I ask you today to invest in hope. Invest in healing. Let us all invest in a future free from domestic violence.

I respectfully submit my testimony here in support of LD875, for your consideration.

Thank you,

Jim Coelho