



3/20/2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Members of Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Fatuma Hussein, and I am the Executive Director of the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine (IRCM). I am here today to express our strong support for LD 117, An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services.

Since 2003, IRCM has been providing targeted advocacy, education and direct victim services such as safety planning, protection from abuse order, court accompaniment, interpreter and cultural broker services, transportation, medical accompaniment, support groups, referral services for immigration, mental health, medical, housing, financial support and much more

The populations we serve are very vulnerable, have experienced the worst atrocities a human being can experience including genocide and they bring with them historical trauma. Regardless of our experiences, the majority of us start over; we go to work, attend school, volunteer and become part of the collective community. We embrace our second chance in life, we are eager to go to work, we are eager to fit in, we are eager to live a normal life where we don't have to worry about whether or not we will make it every day. We come from war torn or unsafe countries and America welcomed us and promised to provide opportunities where we can thrive, recover, believe and begin to trust again, that we deserve to live.

At IRCM, we serve survivors of sexual violence from Maine's immigrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking communities. Many of these survivors face unique and complex barriers when seeking safety and support—barriers such as language access, immigration status concerns, and cultural stigmas around disclosing sexual violence. For these individuals, sexual assault advocates are nothing short of life-saving.

When a survivor calls in fear, an advocate is the voice on the other end of the line, offering compassion and reassurance in a crisis. When language is a barrier, the advocate ensures that communication is clear and that no survivor is left confused or afraid. When a survivor enters a hospital, court, or police station, the advocate stands beside them—amplifying their voice and ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect.

However, the advocates who provide these vital services are stretched thin. On-call often and underpaid, they are still asked to carry the emotional and logistical weight of walking with survivors through every step of their healing. Without LD 117, we risk losing these experienced, skilled advocates—the very people who make it possible for survivors to find safety, justice, and hope.

Advocates are often their only bridge to healing for Maine's immigrant and refugee survivors. Without these services, many survivors will be left without support, unsure of how to access legal protections, healthcare, or safety. No survivor should be alone simply because there is insufficient funding to keep these services strong.

LD 117 is more than a funding bill—it is a commitment to equity, safety, and justice for all survivors, regardless of their background, language, or legal status. It acknowledges that advocates must be paid fair, living wages for the skilled, essential work they do. It declares that Maine will not turn its back on survivors or the people who stand beside them.

On behalf of the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine and the communities we serve, I urge you to support and fully fund LD 117. Let us stand together to ensure that no survivor—regardless of where they come from—walks their path alone.

Thank you.

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