



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

**My name is Samantha Marquis, and I am a forensic interviewer at the Children's Advocacy Center serving Kennebec and Somerset counties. I am submitting testimony in support of LD 117, An Act to Provide Funding for Sexual Assault Services.**

A forensic interview of a child is a developmentally sensitive and legally sound method of gathering factual information regarding allegations of abuse. I have been a child forensic interviewer since 2014. In those ten years I have conducted nearly 2,000 child forensic interviews.

In those years, I have worked with hundreds of families dealing with the aftermath of a child's disclosure of their abuse and the many systems they find themselves needing to navigate. Every day, I have the privilege of sitting with children from the age of three to eighteen, who have endured unimaginable trauma. My role as a forensic interviewer is to create a safe, neutral space so children can express what happened to them, without the need for continued interviews.

There is so much expertise and training that goes into being a forensic interviewer. I have had ten years to work on this craft. On top of the required 40-hour training to become a forensic interviewer. Interviewers also must meet monthly for Peer Reviews of our interviews, and we are required to obtain eight hours of continuing education every two years. Our jobs are critically important to successful criminal cases- and we take that responsibility seriously. The need for well-trained and well-compensated forensic interviewers is not just a matter of fairness to those in the field- it's a matter of ensuring the children who have experienced trauma are treated with respect, dignity, and the professionalism they deserve.

But I would not be able to do this work, while also being a mother of three, without my husband working in the corporate world. With the cost of living, bills and student loans, my salary would not be enough. The fact that I can do this work anyway is a gift-but it isn't fairly compensated, and most advocates are not in my position.

If we want talented young people to be able to choose this work, with all it asks of us, we have to be able to offer them a salary they can live on. I ask that the committee please pass and fund LD 117.

**Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.**