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Testimony in support:  
LD 1139, "An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes"  
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
April 17th, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Laura Harper, I live in Hallowell and I'm a Senior Associate at Moose Ridge Associates. I'm here today to provide testimony on behalf of my client, Maine Family Planning, in support of LD 1139, "An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes."

Maine Family Planning provides comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care to teens and adults at 19 locations statewide. Our mission is to ensure that all people have access to high-quality, culturally relevant and affordable sexual and reproductive health care services, comprehensive sexual health education, and the right to control their sexual and reproductive lives.

In addition to the sexual and reproductive health services you would assume MFP provides, we offer expanded services for pregnant women, new moms, and their families in Hancock and Washington counties. We are the WIC provider for Downeast Maine with offices in Calais, Ellsworth and Machias. In Hancock county we also operate Maine Families which provides in-home parenting information while developing caring, supportive relationships with parents. Our Maine Families program provides resources for families around pregnancy, nutrition, baby and child health care, breastfeeding/formula feeding, immunizations, child growth and development, discipline, toilet training, and child and household safety. We also operate a monthly play group in Ellsworth for families in the program with children up to three years old.

In order for our patients and their families to thrive, Maine needs to continue to provide the web of social, legal and other services for survivors of violence, far too many of whom are mothers and their children. VOCA funding has been at the core of these life-saving services. In fiscal year 2025-2026, shortfalls in the federal Victims of Crime Fund will result in up to a 62% reduction to currently funded services, after years of flat funding. Without the actions proposed in LD 1139, the resulting cuts will devastate services that victims and survivors count on to support them through an already difficult time.

What VOCA funds now is beyond DV and SA. These dollars pay for services for all victims of crime. Without LD 1139's passage, the impact will be felt particularly in rural Maine, which is already resource poor. For every VOCA funded entity, not sustaining the state funds to cover the VOCA shortfall would result in fewer people to serve victims directly and there would be fewer partners to help support the broader community response to crime victims. MFP health centers are in these rural communities, building connections and using every resource available to strengthen families. We know that just like family planning, victim services are ultimately cost savings.

For these reasons, Maine Family Planning urges you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1139. Thank you for your time today and I'm happy to try and answer any questions.