



Holly Stover

71 Dover Rd.

Boothbay, ME 04537

Phone: (207) 633-5979

Holly.Stover@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

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Testimony of Representative Holly B. Stover in support of
**LD 1139, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for
Victims of Crimes**

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. I am Representative Holly Stover, serving House District 48. Thank you for the opportunity to speak as a cosponsor in favor of LD 1139, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes.

I come before you today to urgently highlight the critical importance of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding in supporting crime victims throughout Maine. As you are likely aware, we are facing a devastating \$6 million reduction in VOCA funding. This cut will have a profound and detrimental impact on the essential services we provide to crime victims across the state.

For years, VOCA funding has served as the backbone of our ability to offer crucial services to victims of a wide range of crimes, including domestic violence, sexual assault and homicide. These services are vital to supporting victims in their healing journeys and ensuring justice is served.

Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, in particular, rely heavily on VOCA-funded programs for critical services such as counseling, legal support, emergency shelter and advocacy. For many survivors, these services are lifelines, helping them rebuild their lives and navigate the complex and traumatic aftermath of their experiences.

The impact of VOCA funding goes far beyond immediate crisis intervention. It plays a key role in addressing the long-term consequences of crime, ensuring that victims continue to receive the support they need to heal and regain a sense of safety and stability.

In cases of homicide, VOCA funding provides crucial assistance to families who are grieving the loss of a loved one. This support covers funeral expenses, offers grief counseling and provides

other essential services to help families cope with both the emotional and financial burdens they face.

As a family member and survivor of domestic violence homicide, I can personally attest to the critical difference VOCA-funded services can make. My family experienced this tragedy when my aunt, my father's sister, was murdered by her fiancé. At that time, VOCA services were not available, but through my professional work with advocates across the state, I know firsthand how much we needed—and would have greatly benefited from—these vital supports to help us navigate the trauma and loss we endured.

A \$6 million reduction in VOCA funding would have catastrophic consequences for crime victims in Maine. It would significantly reduce the availability of services, leaving vulnerable individuals without the critical support they need in their darkest moments. The effects of this funding cut would ripple throughout our communities, as unaddressed trauma has far-reaching consequences on public health and safety.

I urge you to support this measure and join me in advocating for full funding of crime victim services in Maine. Our ability to serve and support crime victims depends on the continuation of this essential funding. Together, we can ensure that the most vulnerable among us receive the care and assistance they need to rebuild their lives.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. Please feel free to reach out if you need additional information or have any questions.