



# MCEDV.

The Maine Coalition  
to End Domestic Violence

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**Testimony of Francine Garland Stark**  
**In Support of (Amended) LD 1598: "An Act to Provide Relocation Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Sex Trafficking"**  
**Thursday, April 17, 2025**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, I am Francine Garland Stark, Executive Director, speaking on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)<sup>1</sup> to offer our support for Representative Stover's proposed amendment to LD 1598, An Act to Provide Relocation Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Sex Trafficking.

The intent of this bill is incredibly responsive to the needs of survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking. Victims of these crimes often need to consider and take steps to relocate for safety, for stability, and for peace of mind. Maine's victim services providers collaborate very closely with Maine's Victim Compensation Fund Program, a program operated through the Maine Office of the Attorney General. Rules promulgated by the Victim Compensation Fund Board already partly address needs of these victims for financial support for relocation. Because the VCF's application processing takes some time, time that is not often able to accommodate the immediate needs of these victims for relocation support, the VCF program has a long history of collaboration with victim services providers. This collaboration involves local victim services providers granting a victim with financial assistance to support some relocation expenses, specifically a security deposit on a new apartment, up front. The VCF then arranges with the local victim services provider to reimburse those costs.

Much of the language in the original bill draft would work to create procedural and substantive barriers to the current process for supporting victims with relocation that has been established collaboratively between victim services providers and the VCF program. Understanding Representative Stover's longstanding commitment to advocacy for effective solutions to identified needs of crime victims, MCEDV has worked with Representative Stover to bring forward an enhancement to the Victim Compensation Fund's authorizing statute that would move the ball forward in terms of the VCF's ability to respond more comprehensively to a crime victim's relocation needs.

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<sup>1</sup> MCEDV serves and supports a membership of Maine's eight regional domestic violence resource centers as well as two culturally specific service providers. Together, these programs served more than 12,000 victims of domestic violence in Maine last year.

Though this amendment changes only a few words in the statute, it will lead to rulemaking that will allow the VCF to expand the types of relocation costs it can reimburse for, which will deepen the community collaboration and allow it to respond more comprehensively to survivor needs. This change would allow the VCF to potentially reimburse for things like a moving van, a few nights in a hotel while transitioning from one home to another, and things like plane or bus tickets when safety and stability necessitate long-distance relocation.

The slight change proposed in Representative Stover's amendment will have a measurable impact. We encourage you to support it.

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