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*Testimony of Representative Holly B. Stover presenting*  
**LD 1598, An Act to Provide Relocation Assistance to Victims of  
Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Sex Trafficking**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary*

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Holly Stover, and I am here today to present **LD 1598, An Act to Provide Relocation Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Sex Trafficking.**

Domestic violence and sexual assault happen in every one of our communities. Each year, Maine's domestic violence prevention and response programs work with thousands of people from every corner of our state who are experiencing violence and abuse. Roughly half of them have at least one child in their home. Many of these individuals need help finding and securing a safe, stable place to live for themselves – and often for their children as well.

During my career, which has included time as director of the Office of Violence Prevention within the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and as a member of the Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel, I have seen time and time again how critically important it is to provide survivors with direct support so that they can escape violence, keep themselves and their families safe, and begin to rebuild their lives.

Too often, this is literally a matter of life and death. We know that nearly half of all homicides in Maine are the result of domestic violence. When it comes to our response, the stakes could not be higher.

LD 1598 seeks to expand the support and resources available to survivors. Since submitting the bill, I have worked with stakeholders to propose an amendment to the bill as drafted, which is attached to this testimony and I believe will better achieve its goal. As drafted, the bill could unintentionally limit assistance to survivors, particularly those who are victimized more than once, and slow down the process of getting support to those who need it most urgently. Instead,

the proposed amendment would make a modest change to current law that would have an outsize positive effect on efforts to provide relocation assistance to survivors.

Specifically, the proposed amendment replaces the phrase “security deposits” in current law with “relocation expenses.” This will allow much needed flexibility as we respond to the needs of survivors.

All people deserve a life free from violence, coercion and fear. Please support LD 1598 as we are proposing to amend it. Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you have for me.

**Amend Title 5, Section 3360, subsection 4 of the Victim Compensation Fund Statute**

**4. Eligible expenses and losses.** "Eligible expenses and losses" means expenses and losses resulting from a personal injury sustained by an individual as a direct result of a crime specified in subsection 3 and may include medical and medically related expenses, psychological or mental health counseling expenses, lost wages, funeral, burial and other homicide-related expenses and travel expenses and loss of income of a claimant or family member for providing or obtaining care for the personal injury of a minor or incapacitated victim. "Eligible expenses and losses" may include costs of eyeglasses, hearing aids, dentures or other prosthetic devices taken, lost, destroyed or damaged as a result of the crime, costs to repair, replace or install locks or security devices, costs of crime scene cleanup and ~~security deposits~~relocation expenses. Expenses and losses claimed under this subsection must be expenses or losses actually and reasonably incurred.