

# **mecasa**

## **MAINE COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT**

February 17, 2026

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is ~~Carlie Fischer~~ and I am offering testimony today on behalf of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA), the organization which represents and serves Maine's sexual violence prevention and response programs as well as Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers. MECASA initiates and advocates for survivor-centered public policy; provides expert training, technical assistance, and resources for providers and partners; and funds the service providers in your communities.

MECASA is here today in support of LD 2207, An Act Regarding the Statute of Limitations for Certain Sexual Offenses Committed Against Minors. Thank you to Representative Kuhn for sponsoring this important legislation.

This bill represents a logical next step in the Legislature's ongoing work to ensure Maine's statutes of limitation reflect both the seriousness of commercial sexual exploitation of children and the realities faced by minor victims. Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is an umbrella term that includes sex trafficking and other forms of abuse in which sexual activity with a minor is exchanged for something of value. Under Maine law, aggravated sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of a minor are two crimes that fall within this broader CSEC category.

In the 1st Session of the 132nd Legislature, the statute of limitations for aggravated sex trafficking was extended to 20 years through Public Law 2025, chapter 479 (formerly LD 1427, An Act Extending the Statute of Limitations on Criminal Actions Involving Aggravated Sex Trafficking). That change was an important step toward accountability, but it highlighted an inconsistency in Maine law, which already eliminates the statute of limitations for several sexual offenses committed against minors, including gross sexual assault and other comparable crimes, while aggravated sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of a minor remained subject to time limits.

Recognizing this disparity, the Legislature directed the Criminal Law Advisory Commission to review statutes of limitation for sexual offenses, including whether extended limitation periods should apply to additional crimes. LD 2207 reflects the outcome of that review by aligning aggravated sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of minors with Maine's existing approach to other sexual offenses against youth. Treating CSEC differently than other sexual crimes creates an arbitrary distinction that this bill corrects.

Furthermore, an extended statute of limitation benefits survivors because delayed disclosure is the norm, not the exception, in cases involving sexual mistreatment of minors. Survivors of CSEC often face coercion, manipulation, threats, and profound trauma. It can take decades before a survivor is able to safely disclose what happened, and even longer to seek justice and accountability. A statute of limitations can close the door to justice before that disclosure is possible.

This bill also presents an opportunity to ensure parity for other populations that are targeted for commercial sexual exploitation at disproportionate rates, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Maine law already recognizes the seriousness of these harms by explicitly referencing "persons with mental disabilities" in the commercial sexual exploitation statute. When the criminal code identifies a population within the elements of an offense, it reflects a legislative determination that the harms they face warrant meaningful protection. Extending the same statute of limitations framework to these survivors would promote consistency in the public law changes under consideration and ensure protected populations are treated accordingly.

Eliminating the statute of limitations does not guarantee prosecution or conviction. It simply ensures that when survivors are ready to come forward and evidence supports a case, the justice system can respond. This change would align Maine law with its existing principles by affording youth and people with I/DD who are trafficked or commercially sexually exploited the same opportunity for justice as victims of other serious sexual crimes.

For these reasons, we strongly support the bill. Thank you for your consideration. We hope you will support LD 2207 and would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

## **About Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers**

One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Each year, 19,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.<sup>2</sup>

Maine's sexual violence service providers provide free and confidential services across the state to victims/survivors of sexual harassment and sexual assault and those close to them, as well as to individuals who wish to increase their understanding of the issues. Just some of the services include a 24-hour statewide sexual assault helpline, crisis intervention and information, support groups, in-person accompaniment and advocacy through the medical and legal systems, and school- and community-based prevention education. Services are provided for a victim/survivor regardless of when they experienced sexual violence, and regardless of what type of sexual violence they experienced. Types of sexual violence include, but are not limited to, sexual harassment and gender-based bullying, child sexual abuse, elder sexual abuse, stalking, sex trafficking, and sexual violence within an intimate partner relationship.

*24/7 Confidential*

*Maine Sexual Assault Helpline: 1-800-871-7741*

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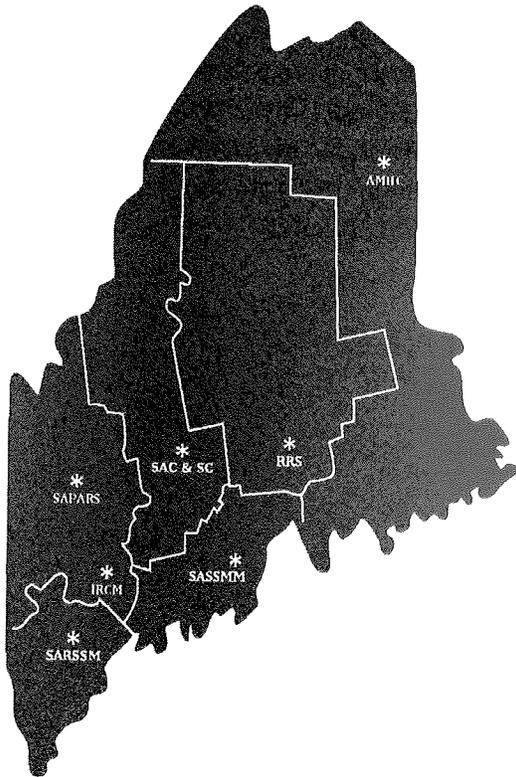
<sup>1</sup> Murray, C., Dumont, R & Shaler, G. (2022). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Maine Statistical Analysis Center. University of Southern Maine.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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**MAINE COALITION AGAINST  
SEXUAL ASSAULT**

info@mecasa.org | mecasa.org  
207-626-0034



**STATEWIDE  
SEXUAL ASSAULT HELPLINE  
1-800-871-7741**

**Free. Private. 24/7.**

## **MAINE'S SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTERS**

### **AMHC Sexual Assault Services (AMHC)**

Serving Aroostook, Hancock, & Washington Counties •  
amhasas.org

### **Immigrant Resource Center of Maine**

Serving Androscoggin & Cumberland Counties • ircofmaine.org

### **Rape Response Services (RRS)**

Serving Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties • rronline.org

### **Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Services (SAPARS)**

Serving Androscoggin, Oxford & Franklin Counties and the towns of  
Bridgton & Harrison • sapars.org

### **Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Center (SAC & SC)**

Serving Kennebec & Somerset Counties • silentnomore.org

### **Sexual Assault Response Services of Southern Maine (SARSSM)**

Serving Cumberland & York Counties • sarssm.org

### **Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine (SASSMM)**

Serving Eastern Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Knox, Waldo & Lincoln  
Counties • sassmm.org

## **MORE SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES**

**Maine TransNet** • mainetrans.net • info@mainetransnet.org

**Wabanaki Women's Coalition** • wabanakiwomenscoalition.org  
207-763-3478

**Aroostook Band of Micmacs, Domestic & Sexual Violence  
Advocacy Center** • 207-551-3639

**Houlton Band of Maliseets, Domestic & Sexual Violence  
Advocacy Center** • 207-532-6401

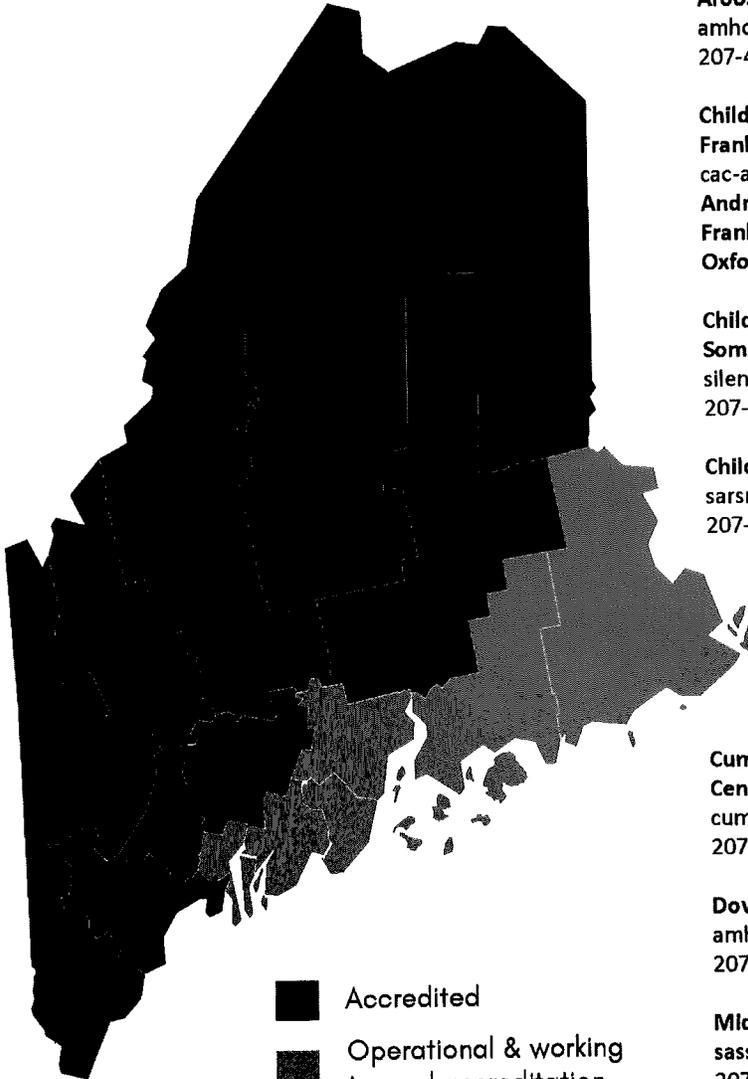
**Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual  
Violence Advocacy Center** • 207-214-1917

**Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations** • 1-877-853-2613

**Penobscot Indian Nation, Domestic & Sexual Violence  
Advocacy Center** • 207-631-4886



# Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers



Accredited  
 Operational & working toward accreditation

**Aroostook County Children's Advocacy Center**  
amhcsas.org  
207-472-6134

**Children's Advocacy Center of Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford Counties**  
cac-af0.org  
Androscoggin: 207-784-0436  
Franklin: 207-778-9777  
Oxford: 207-739-1228

**Children's Advocacy Center of Kennebec & Somerset Counties**  
silentnomore.org/about-our-cac  
207-861-4491

**Children's Advocacy Center of York County**  
sarsmm.org  
207-459-2380

**Cumberland County Children's Advocacy Center**  
cumberlandcountycac.org  
207-879-6160

**Downeast Children's Advocacy Center**  
amhcsas.org  
207-255-3687

**Midcoast Children's Advocacy Center**  
sassmm.org  
207-522-7162

**Penquis Children's Advocacy Center**  
penquiscac.org  
207-974-2469