

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 Elizabeth Ward Saxl and I am submitting 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 victim-centered public policy; provides expert training, technical assistance, and resources for providers and partners; and funds the service providers in your communities.

MECASA supports LD 395, "An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations." Many thanks to Representative Talbot Ross for sponsoring this important bill and for her many years of work on this critical issue. The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault recognizes the long-standing harm our state government has perpetrated against the Wabanaki Nations in denying them the same rights and sovereignty given to the 570 other federally recognized tribes in this country.

Of particular concern to our Coalition is the impact of the Settlement Act on their ability to respond to cases of sexual violence in their communities. We know that:

- Native women experience sexual assault at one of the highest rates of any population.
- According to a 2010 GAO Study, U.S. Attorneys declined to prosecute sixty-seven percent of sexual abuse, firearms violations, homicide and other violent crimes occurring in the lives of Native American women.
- Violence against Native women occurs across a continuum in the lives of Native women, at one end is verbal abuse and at the other end is murder. Most Native women do not report

these crimes because their experience shows that nothing will be done. (National Institute of Justice, 2000; US Government Accountability Office, 2010; Amnesty International, 2007).

MECASA supports the Wabanaki Women's Coalition and their mission "to increase the capacity of tribal communities to respond to domestic and sexual violence, and influence tribal, national, and regional systems to increase awareness, safety, justice, and healing for all our relations." The tribes cannot fulfill that mission without access to the tools that sovereignty provides.

The legal authority to pursue the policies that are in their communities' best interests is integral to any peoples' autonomy – the tribes must have the power to create solutions that are culturally-appropriate and sensitive to the needs of their people. Reckoning with our failures begins with giving the Wabanaki people the ability to pursue legal remedies and the control to govern themselves.

On a personal note, I know that many of my ancestors committed, and benefited from, genocide of the people native to what we call Northern New England – and I am aware of specific points in history, going back to the 1600s, where they murdered Wabanaki people.

I can draw a line between those murders and the claiming of land here, and the privilege I enjoy today. Also, today, there would be thousands more Wabanaki people, if they had not committed those murders – and I am certain our present and future would be better for having those generations of people living on these lands. Many of us live with a similar legacy and must find ways to do better by the people of these sovereign nations.

I urge you to vote to pass LD 395.

About Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers

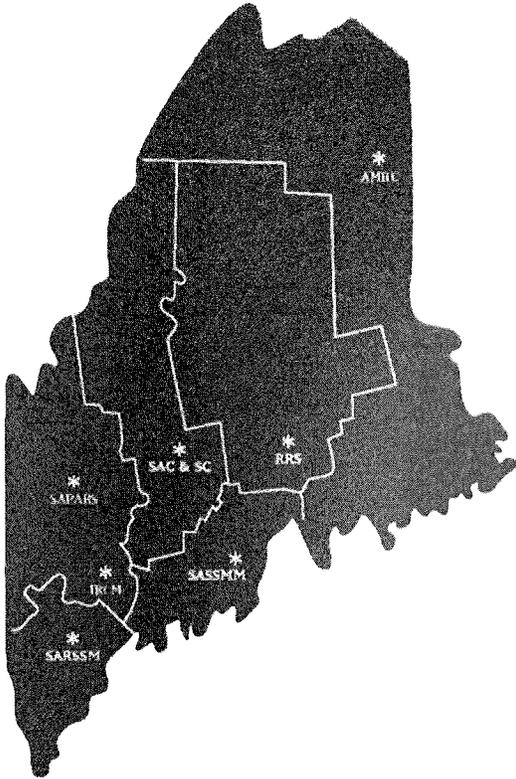
One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.¹ Each year, 19,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.²

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.

mecasa

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 •
amhcas.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

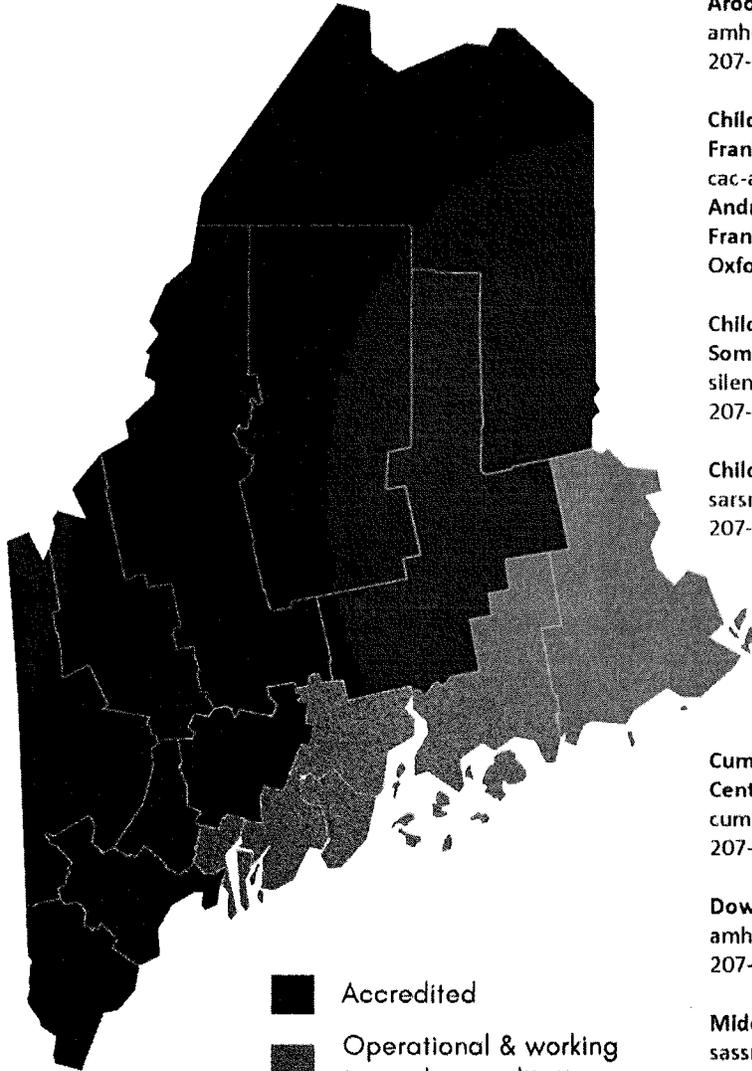
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

Passamaquoddy Peaceful Relations • 1-877-853-2613

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



Maine's Children's Advocacy Centers



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