February 27, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Judiciary and Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committees:

My name is Misty Richardson. I am a resident of Lewiston. I am a survivor of sexual violence and trafficking.

I am here to testify in support of LD 2212, An Act Making Unified Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027, and to ask that you to amend this budget to include ongoing funding for sexual assault services moving forward.

The advocates at Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Services (SAPARS) helped me feel safe by supporting me in my journey. In the beginning, when I left my exploitation with absolutely nothing - they provided me with a safe house as well as all of my basic necessities. This would not have been possible without funding. They also had advocates who could support me anytime, night or day. Without a living wage, we cannot keep these amazing, talented advocates who commit their time and effort - and need to be there for the next person like me who needs them.

I am entirely grateful for the advocates who have supported me in my journey. Without this funding, they won't be able to stay in this work where they do so much good.

I am able to stand here today and share my story because of SAPARS. Today, I am a mother and productive member of society. 7 years ago, I didn't know if I would make it out alive, and now I am thriving. That's because there were people who were on my side, available to help any time - day or night. I urge you to support moving ongoing funding into the budget to continue to support sexual assault and prevention. This is important more now than ever, as there is a great need for it.

Lastly, I want to thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions that you have.