



April 8, 2021

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler, and Members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services:

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](#). 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.

We also oversee the [Maine Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Network](#) and the [Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Centers](#).

I am here today in support of LD 1115, "An Act to Improve Access to HIV Prevention Medications."

Each year, 14,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.¹ HIV Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is one of the possible treatments for survivors of sexual violence immediately following an assault. If it is determined by a medical provider that a survivor is at risk of HIV transmission, a 3-5 day supply of PEP is included as part of the free sexual assault medical/forensic exam at any emergency department in Maine.

However, we continue to hear from advocates that obtaining and paying for the necessary prescription to complete the remaining course of medication remains a barrier for survivors. In a 2019 survey of sexual assault center staff, 30% of advocates said they had worked with a survivor in the past two years when "there were barriers accessing PEP after getting a prescription." Navigating the world following a sexual assault can be ungrounding, overwhelming, and scary, and this bill offers a solution to many current barriers for survivors.

¹ Dumont, R. & Shaler, G. (2015). *Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities*. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

Over the years we have worked with many of the other providers you have heard support this legislation to find more accessible, affordable, and simpler ways for those most vulnerable to HIV transmission to receive the prevention medication they need. However, more needs to be done. The solutions proposed in this bill address some of the perennial barriers we have seen and will offer much needed support to survivors of sexual violence.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Maine Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Network

The Maine Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Network (Maine STEN) is Maine's statewide resource for trafficking-related training and technical assistance. Maine STEN's focus is on developing training, policy solutions, and best practices to support direct service providers and multidisciplinary teams respond to trafficking. Some of the key projects of Maine STEN include our statewide trafficking training curriculum, trafficking outreach materials for statewide use, and a statewide provider council, which helps set statewide priorities and develop resources for more effective provision of services to victims and those at risk of human trafficking. Maine STEN also houses the Maine Human Trafficking Survivor Fund which in FFY20 served 106 unique survivors of human trafficking and sex exploitation in Maine helping them meet 142 individual emergency needs. Maine STEN provides centralized online access (www.mainesten.org) to Maine's anti-trafficking efforts and resources.

Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers

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 (1-800-871-7741), 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.

The Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Centers

The Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Centers is a membership organization committed to promoting Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) and supporting existing and emerging centers. The Network promotes the development, growth, and utilization of CACs and multi-disciplinary teams to more effectively respond to Maine's sexually abused children and their families. The Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Centers is a program of the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault

and is an accredited member of the National Children's Alliance. The Network has seven members across Maine. The Maine Network of Children's Advocacy Centers provides statewide representation and support for Maine's local Children's Advocacy Centers including, resource sharing and mentoring, technical assistance, public policy advocacy, and statewide communication.