



April 17, 2025

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

My name is Melissa Martin, 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 victim-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 1598 as amended, "An Act to Provide Relocation Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Sex Trafficking." Thank you to Representative Stover for sponsoring this important legislation.

Sexual violence is a serious and costly public health problem in the Maine—nearly one in five adult Maine residents reports that they have been the victim of rape or attempted rape during their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Roughly 14,000 Maine residents may be the victim of rape or unwanted sexual activity during any 12 month period.<sup>2</sup> Sexual assault results in more than \$122,000 in costs per victim.<sup>3</sup> With about 25 million rape survivors in the U.S. right now, we can expect to spend more than \$3 trillion over their lifetimes on health care, criminal justice response, lost productivity, and other costs.<sup>4</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Peterson, C., DeGue, S., Florence, C., & Lokey, C. N. (2017). Lifetime economic burden of rape among U.S. adults. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 52, 691-701. Retrieved from [https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(16\)30615-8/pdf](https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(16)30615-8/pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Id.

One of the costs that sexual violence survivors face is the cost of relocation after sexual harm has occurred. Survivors may want or need to relocate for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to concerns for their physical safety and the traumatic impact of remaining in the home or community where the violence occurred.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is essential that the victim's compensation fund in Maine be able to provide for these costs.

Reimbursing relocation costs can help Maine create better support systems for survivors of interpersonal violence while also being a smart investment that saves money in the long run. When survivors can move safely to a new place, they are less likely to experience violence again and can avoid ongoing psychological damage, resulting in a decreased need for mental health support, emergency services, and legal aid. Survivors who settle in safe environments are more likely to find employment and contribute to the economy compared to those who continue to struggle with the effects of trauma.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, providing help for relocation is a proactive way to ease systemic strain and build stronger, more resilient communities.

For these reasons, we strongly support the bill as amended. Thank you for your consideration. We hope you will support LD 1598 as amended.

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### About Maine's Sexual Assault Service Providers

One in five Mainers will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.<sup>7</sup> Each year, 19,000 Mainers will experience sexual violence.<sup>8</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

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<sup>5</sup> Office for Victims of Crime. (n.d.). *Victims of Crime Act administrators*. <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/victims-crime-act-voca-administrators/victim-assistance/vocapedia#:~:text=Relocation%20expenses%E2%80%94generally%2C%20those%20expenses,a%20victim%E2%80%94are%20allowable%20expenses>.

<sup>6</sup> National Alliance of Trauma Recovery Centers. (2020, January). *Trauma Recovery Centers: Addressing the needs of underserved crime survivors*. <https://allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TRAUMA-RECOVERY-CENTERSAddressing-the-Needs-of-Underserved-Crime-Survivors.pdf>

<sup>7</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>8</sup> *Ibid.*

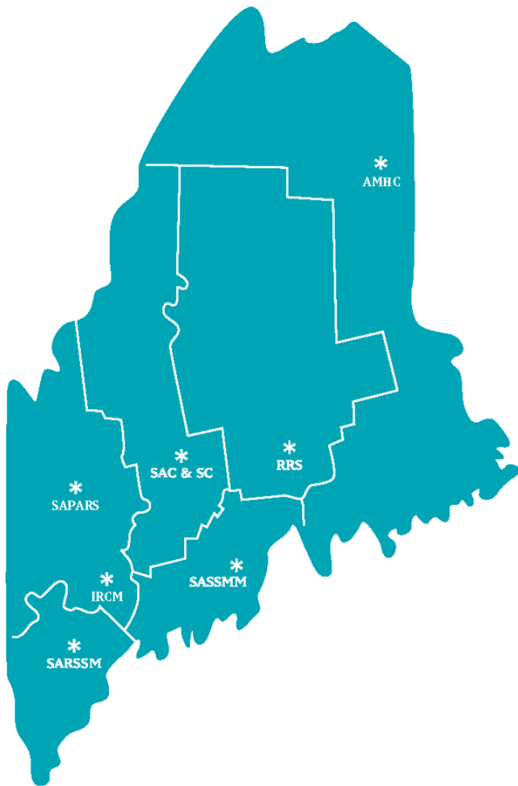
groups, in-person accompaniment and advocacy through the medical and legal systems, and school- and community-based prevention education. Services are provided for a victim/survivor regardless of when they experienced sexual violence, and regardless of what type of sexual violence they experienced. Types 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](tel:1-800-871-7741)*

# 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 •  
amhcsas.org

### Immigrant Resource Center of Maine

Serving Androscoggin & Cumberland Counties • ircofmaine.org

### Rape Response Services (RRS)

Serving Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties • rrsonline.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

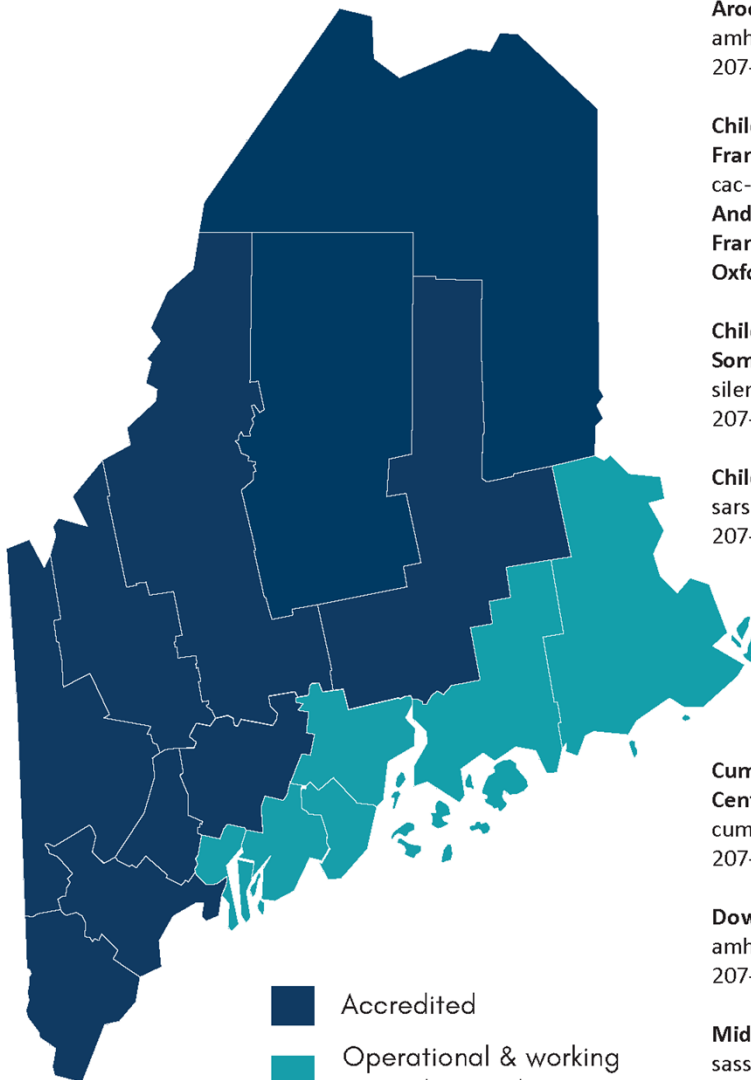
Indian Township Passamaquoddy, Domestic & Sexual  
Violence Advocacy Center • 207-214-1917

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-afo.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