



## **Maine Chiefs of Police Association**

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### **Statement in support of**

### **L.D. 1139, An Act to Provide Funding for Essential Services for Victims of Crimes**

### **Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary**

**April 17, 2025**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Charles Rumsey. I am the Chief of the Cumberland Police Department, and the Legislative Chair of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association in support of LD 1139.

The mission of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association is to secure a closer official and personal relationship among Maine Police Officials; to secure a unity of action in law enforcement matters; to enhance the standards of police personnel, police training and police professionalism generally; to devise ways and means for equality of law enforcement throughout the state of Maine; to advance the prevention and detection of crime; to prescribe to the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics; and to promote the profession of law enforcement as an integral and dedicated force in today's society sworn to the protection of life and property.

LD 1139 provides funding for crime victim services of \$6 million annually and requires any balance remaining at the end of a fiscal year appropriated to the Department of Health and Human Services to supplement grants under the federal victim assistance formula grant program to be carried forward to the next fiscal year for the same purpose. Last year, I stood before this committee as the Cumberland Police Chief to advocate for the same issue and financial allocation by the legislature. It is an honor to do so again this year on behalf of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association.

Through These Doors (TTD), the domestic violence resource center in Cumberland County established the Enhanced Police Intervention Collaboration (EPIC) program with three local law enforcement departments in 2009. The goals of the program were to build a solid coordinated community response between local domestic violence advocacy program and law enforcement departments to support survivors, hold offenders accountable, and to address gaps in systems

that support these goals. EPIC advocates were assigned to collaborate with police departments to provide in-person follow-up services when a domestic violence crime was reported.

At the inception of this program, TTD had 4 full time advocates dedicated to the EPIC program, able to partner with every law enforcement department in Cumberland County. This program receives domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking reports after a report has been generated (arrest or no arrest reports). TTD has provided in-person partner advocacy services or phone follow-up services to thousands of survivors through this one program since 2009. Today, however, due to rising costs and flat funding, TTD is only able to dedicate 1 full time and 1 part time advocate to support the program, limiting their ability to respond.

Domestic violence resources centers across Maine are facing drastic cutbacks due to the funding that directly supports critical domestic violence advocacy and support services failing to keep pace with the demand. If TTD is forced to reduce victim services further, the EPIC program would not be offered to survivors and their children resident in Cumberland County. In addition, trainings offered to law enforcement in Cumberland County such as the "Responding to Non-Fatal Strangulation" and other on-going domestic violence-related trainings would not be offered to help support law enforcement in receiving the current education re: how to best respond to survivors in domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or sex trafficking.

Survivors are asked to provide feedback to TTD and our departments regularly since 2009 to ensure quality programming. They are routinely asked if:

- Did the Enhanced Police Intervention Collaboration services help increase their safety plan?
- Would they call the local police department again if needed?

An overwhelming average of 90% of survivors answered YES to both answers consistently throughout the span of this programming. It should be noted that many of the survivors who utilize the EPIC program were not accessing or aware of their local domestic violence resources before contacting their local law enforcement.

If the EPIC program and other victim services programs do not receive the necessary increase in funding that LD 1139 would ensure, many survivors and their children will not have the coordinated community response advocacy and law enforcement services offered to provide options, safety, and support to live a life without violence within their home and/or relationship.

We are aware that Governor Mills has proposed \$3 million for these services in the budget currently being considered by the Appropriations Committee. Although we appreciate the inclusion in her proposal, the amount may not be enough to fund these essential crime victim services due to the uncertainty of what funding may be available from the federal victim assistance formula grant program.

For these reasons, the Maine Chiefs of Police Association supports the passage of LD 1139. We respectfully ask members of the Committee to vote Ought to Pass.