

Testimony Regarding
LD 1171: An Act to Prevent Sexual and Domestic Violence and Support Survivors

before the
Health and Human Services Committee
129th Maine State Legislature
April 17, 2019

presented by
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Good afternoon Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson, and members of the health and human services committee, thank you for my time to testify in support of LD 1171: An Act to Prevent Sexual and Domestic Violence and Support Survivors. My name is Brooklin Jones. I am a University of Maine Master's of Social Work candidate and resident of Orono. I have a B.A. in International Studies. I have volunteered for various sexual assault response programs for the past 3 years. In the past, I have volunteered for domestic violence programs as well. I am here on behalf of my experience in this field and myself. My testimony does not represent the organizations or groups I have volunteered for.

Sexual assault will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 5 men in their lifetime. In Maine, it is estimated around 14,000 individuals will experience sexual assault or violence every year (MECASA, 2018). This number can only be estimated because not every survivor will have rape kit done or report it to the authorities, as is their right. This number can only be estimated because of the re-traumatization it is to tell the chain of events repeatedly under scrutiny. This number can only be estimated because the burden is on the survivor. I once saw a protester with a sign reading, "Everyone knows someone who has been raped, but no one knows someone who is a rapist." This might due to individuals do not want to associate himself or herself with a perpetrator or offender. Moreover, it is due to perpetrators or offenders not being held accountable for their actions because of the burden of proof, intimate nature of the crime, and the time sensitivity. Only 5 in every 1000 offenders and perpetrators will end up in prison (RAINN, 2019).

I answer hotline calls and talk to survivors about events that happened years ago because it still impacts them. I have met survivors and their loved ones in the hospital. I have sat with survivors and held their hand while they have their body examined for evidence in a room full of strangers. Family members and loved ones aren't allowed in the room during the exam. I have

heard him or her consent to every swab, picture, and test. I have observed the agony, distress, and shame as survivors share what was done to them to a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, responding officer, and detectives. I have passed tissue after tissue to survivors. I have walked through the steps of creating a safety plan with survivors because individuals are more likely to be assaulted by someone they know than a stranger (MECASA, 2019). I have witnessed the guilt and self-blame for what was done against their will no matter how many times they are told this wasn't their fault. I will tell survivors "this is not your fault" a million times if I have to because sexual assault shouldn't happen to anyone. Survivors putting the pieces of their lives together deserve funding to assist in this process. They should not have any more burden in what happened to them.

There are many products designed with good intent to prevent someone safe from assault: mace, drug testing nail polish, sip chips, safety kitty keys, chastity belts, ETC... All of these products put the burden of protection on survivors. All of these products make individuals wonder would it have made a difference if they were using it. All of these products are one more argument a defense attorney has to say they must have been consenting if they weren't using it as prevention. In all honesty, the prevention to sexual assault is education starting in elementary school, and repeatedly throughout the growth and development of youth, about consent, power, and control. Funding for school-based education should happen. For offenders, the only prevention and best effective practice is a combination of jail, strict probation, mandated treatment, and polygraph tests depending on the severity and number of their assaults (Yates, 2003). This funding should not go towards offenders and perpetrators nor should any public funding. The burden of cost should go solely to offenders and perpetrators as part of holding them accountable for their actions against society.

Domestic violence will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men in their lifetime. One in 10 women and 1 in 50 men will experience

stalking in their lifetime. Ninety percent of domestic violence is for power and control (MCEDV, 2019). Due to the power and control sought by offenders and perpetrators, survivors have difficulty leaving because of physiological needs (food, water, shelter, sleep, etc.). The lethality, or capacity to cause death, of the relationship increases during various periods of the relationship but especially when survivors try to leave (Cambell, et al., 2003). I have sat with survivors in shelter make contingency and safety plans. I have answered hotline calls to answer questions by individuals considering leaving these situations. Unfortunately, I have had to go through this process with my brother. After my brother left, his ex was stalking him, threatening to kill him, and impacting his job. His ex was seeking the power and control that was lost when he made the decision to leave. She was willing to do anything to have him back under her manipulation. His situation is not unique and is the case for many individuals and survivors of domestic violence.

Domestic violence prevention is based in school and community education. Education about healthy relationships, communication, safety, and trust is the most effective method for prevention (Wolfe & Jaffe, 2003). Education should be funded as a prevention method. Education is the key to preventing this in society and allowing for greater productivity, community engagement, and quality of life in Maine.

Thank you Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson, and members of the committee for your consideration and I hope you will support this bill so the needed assistance for the prevention of sexual assault and domestic violence and support of survivors can continue. These I welcome any questions that you may have on this legislation.

References

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