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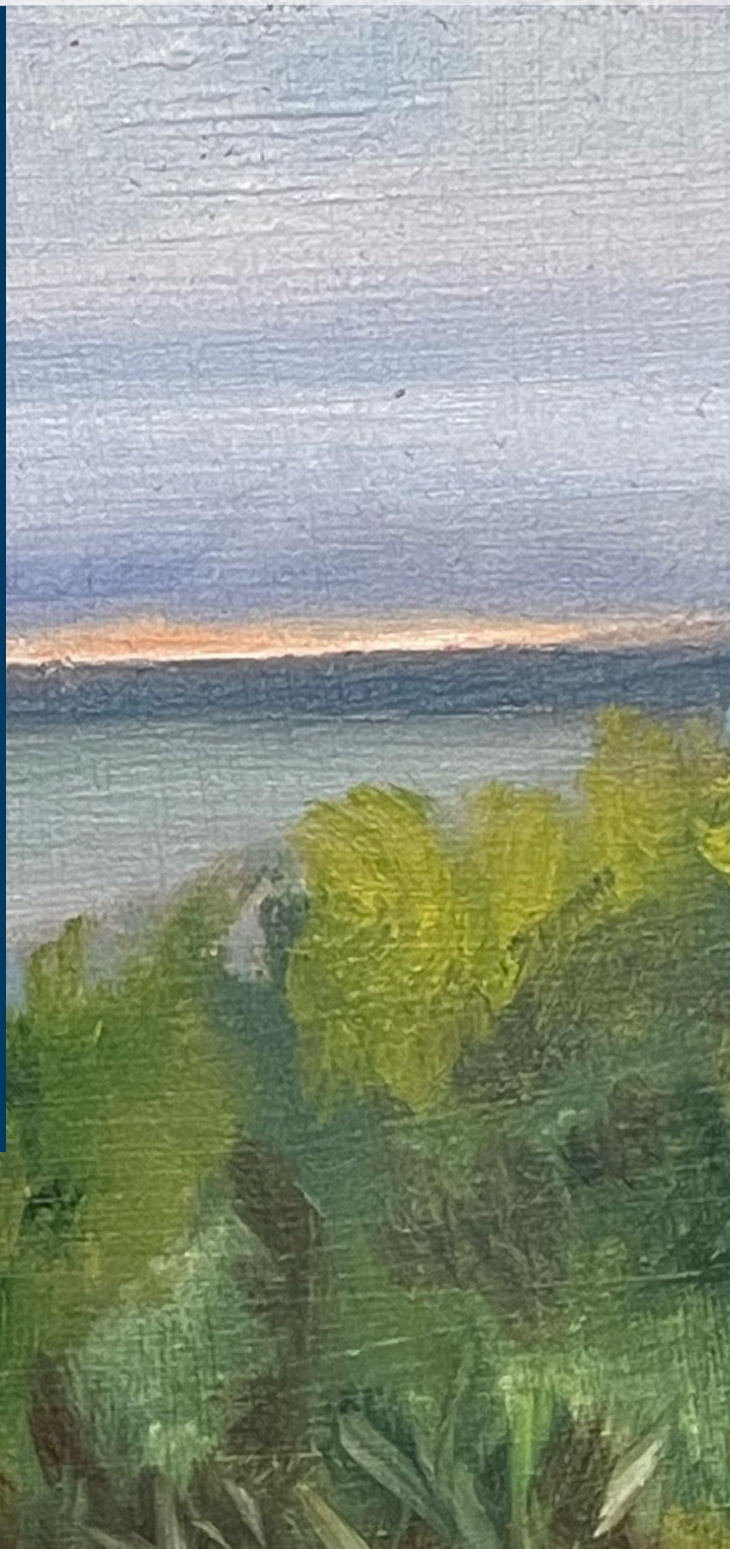
MAINE COALITION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

MECASA 2026 Legislative Report

132nd Legislature
Second Regular Session



2026 Legislative Session

Dear Policy Partners,

Second sessions of the Maine Legislature are notoriously unpredictable. Bills carried over from the first session end up sitting unfunded on the Special Appropriations Table, where their fate depends on a supplemental budget that is always oversubscribed and never assured until moments before adjournment. This year was no exception. Many of our most important priorities went into the session as carryover bills with no funding attached, and we knew that getting them across the finish line would take sustained advocacy, smart strategy, and more than a little persistence. But we're proud to say it paid off!

After years of advocacy, the Legislature funded a statewide sexual assault forensic examination kit tracking and inventory system. Because language from Senator Jill Duson's LD 1816 was included in the supplemental budget, Maine will establish a system that brings transparency and accountability to how forensic evidence is processed, stored, and tracked, both for survivors who report to law enforcement and those who don't. Law enforcement agencies will be required to inventory the kits already in their possession, and the state will finally have the tools to ensure no survivor's evidence is lost or forgotten.

Advocates stand with Senator Anne Carney in support of funding for services.

We also secured a critical victory for the advocates who do this work every day. Last session, we won a one-time increase to sexual assault center staff salaries through Public Law 2025, Chapter 441. This year, that funding was made ongoing in the budget—meaning the raise advocates received isn't a one-year fluke, but a permanent improvement that will help our centers recruit and retain the skilled, compassionate staff survivors depend on. Alongside that, the Legislature made the $3 million in annual Victims of Crime Act replacement funding permanent, providing real long-term stability for community-based sexual assault and domestic violence services after years of uncertainty about federal funding cuts.

Beyond the budget, survivors gained new protections across several fronts.

- Lawmakers strengthened Maine's laws addressing technology-facilitated sexual abuse, including AI-generated child sexual abuse material, closing statutory gaps that have been exploited as technology has outpaced our statutes.

- Survivors of sex trafficking can now seek to seal criminal records tied to crimes that were a direct result of their exploitation, and the statute of limitations was eliminated entirely for sex trafficking of minors.
- Schools will face new requirements for investigating and tracking misconduct by school employees, helping protect students.
- And crime victims gained new rights to be notified and heard when their private records—medical, mental health, educational—are sought in court proceedings.

These wins the result of years of relationship-building, advocacy, coalition work, and the willingness of survivors to share their stories with lawmakers again and again until the message landed. Legislative work can be unpredictable, and we know all too well that the work we pour into our priorities may end in disappointment. But this year, we garnered serious commitment to survivors across Maine that will bring benefits for years to come.

We're grateful for the advocates, survivors, lawmakers, and partners who made these wins possible, and we're already looking ahead to the 133rd Legislature to keep building on this momentum.

In solidarity,

Elizabeth Ward Saxl
Executive Director

Carlie Fischer
Public Policy & Legal Director

Marion Hylan-Barr
Public Policy Specialist

The Appropriations Committee votes unanimously to include funding for sexual assault services in the ongoing state budget.

2026 New Laws

The following are some of our priority bills that became law this year - beginning with those that will directly impact survivors and our work, and including laws that affect the legal system, victims' rights, and communities impacted directly by sexual violence.

Funding Services for Survivors

Public Law 2025 Chapter 650

LD 2212, An Act Making Supplemental Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government 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

Sponsored by Representative Gattine

Public Law 2025, chapter 650 is the General Fund supplemental budget for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027. Chapter 650 incorporates and funds several important bills that were carried over from the First Special Session of the 132nd Legislature, as well as new initiatives of the Second Regular Session. Important elements of the supplemental budget include the following.

Forensic Examination Kit Tracking System

Public Law, 2025 chapter 650 directs the Department of Public Safety to establish, operate, and maintain a sexual assault forensic examination kit tracking system. The system must provide relevant information for victims, both those who choose to report to a law enforcement agency and those who choose not to report, and other approved users, including law enforcement and medical providers, regarding the processing, custody, analysis, and destruction of evidence.

Lead Sponsor Senator Jill Duson's LD 1816 Testimony

"[This bill will] give us data on the number of reported and anonymous kits in storage across the state. It would also give us information about the time frame and quantity of untested, reported kits in the state in order to potentially make a future plan for testing and investigation of these cases[.]"

The Department is required to submit an annual report beginning January 1, 2028, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over criminal justice and public safety matters and to the Governor concerning information related to the status of sexual assault forensic examination kits reported in the tracking system. The department is directed to adopt

routine technical rules, including rules regarding participation in the tracking system, confidentiality, and the operation of the tracking system.

By October 1, 2027, a law enforcement agency that receives, maintains, stores or preserves sexual assault forensic examination kits must complete an inventory of all kits in its possession and report its findings to the Department of Public Safety. The department must compile all agency reports and present findings of the inventory by January 1, 2028, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over criminal justice and public safety matters and at the same time post the report on the department's publicly accessible website.

Public Law 2023, chapter 236 changed a provision in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 25 to require law enforcement agencies to store sexual assault forensic examination kits for 20 years; chapter 650 also amends a provision in Title 24 to require law enforcement agencies to store sexual assault forensic examination kits for 20 years for consistency.

SAFE nurses, advocates, Senator Jill Duson, Rep. Holly Stover, & Governor Mills gather to celebrate a statewide sexual assault kit tracking system.

To support the requirements of the forensic examination kit tracking system and testing, chapter 650 establishes one forensic chemist position and one DNA forensic analyst position and provides funding for related costs, a mobile office unit, and a contracted trainer for the tracking system. In addition to the funding in Public Law 2025, chapter 650, part of the funding for these positions and related expenses is also allocated under the umbrella of the State Police in the supplemental highway budget, which is **Public Law 2025 Chapter 720** (**LD 2213, An Act Making Supplemental Allocations from the Highway Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government 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**). Public Law 2025, chapter 720 was enacted as an emergency measure effective April 26, 2026.

The two bills regarding kit tracking that were carried over from the First Special Session of the 132nd Legislature were **LD 549, An Act to Establish a Statewide Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Kit Tracking System and Update Certain Requirements Regarding Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Kits sponsored by Senator Bennett, and LD 1816, An Act to Establish a Statewide Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Kit Tracking System and Conduct an Inventory of Existing Forensic Examination Kits in the Possession of Law Enforcement sponsored by Senator Duson**. Chapter 650 essentially funds what was LD 1816.

Funding for Victims Services

Public Law 2025, chapter 650 includes making permanent $3 million annually in ongoing funding to address current and anticipated federal funding reductions from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). Services supported by this funding include community-based sexual assault and domestic violence services, victim witness advocates in the criminal justice system, and housing and supportive services for elder abuse victims. Ongoing funding to MECASA will maintain last year's increase in minimum salaries for advocates. In addition to ongoing funding, this budget includes $1 million in one-time support for sexual assault response services and $2 million in one-time support for services for domestic violence services.

Arian Clements, Executive Director, Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine

"This funding bill would be a positive and essential step toward increasing the sustainability of the services in our communities, supporting the professional development of all advocates, and recognizing the true value of a trained advocate to make positive change."

Funding for Civil Legal Services

Public Law 2025, chapter 650 appropriated a total $2 million in ongoing funding and a $1 million one-time appropriation to civil legal services. This funding will help avoid cuts to the free civil legal service providers, like Pine tree Legal Services (PTLA) and Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP), who continue to face rising demands for their essential services.

New Laws Impacting Children

Public Law 2025 Chapter 719

LD 524, An Act to Protect Children from Technology-facilitated Sexual Abuse (former title: An Act to Reduce Trafficking in the State)

Sponsored by Representative Kuhn

Public Law 2025, chapter 719, which was enacted as an emergency measure effective April 16, 2026, makes several changes to Maine Criminal Code Chapter 12: Sexual Exploitation of a Minors, which prohibits the creation, possession, and dissemination of sexually explicit material, referred to in chapter 719 as "child sexual abuse material." The changes are intended to protect children from offenses involving child sexual abuse material that are facilitated by technology.

MECASA's LD 524 Testimony

"There are three reasons that passing this bill is important:

1. AI images often use images of real children, meaning real children are harmed,
2. This type of harm is growing and can only be stopped with legal regulation, and
3. AI images can be used to extort minors into further exploitive situations, such as commercial sexual exploitation."

Chapter 719 creates a number of definitions, including "identifiable child," "image," "obscene material," and "generative AI or machine learning" and amends the definition of "minor" for purposes of Chapter 12 to include only a person who is less than 16 years of age, except that, if the crime of sexual exploitation of a minor involves compulsion, the definition of "minor" continues to include any person who is less than 18 years of age. The crime of "dissemination of sexually explicit material" is renamed "dissemination of child sexual abuse material," and the crime of "possession of sexually explicit material" is renamed "possession of child sexual abuse material."

Chapter 719 also expands the elements of these crimes as well as the crime of sexual exploitation of a minor, which involves the creation of child sexual abuse material, to apply both to child sexual abuse material that depicts or that has been created or modified so that it appears to depict an identifiable child engaged in sexually explicit conduct and to child sexual abuse material, including an image created through generative AI or machine learning, that appears to depict a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct, regardless of whether the minor is an identifiable child, if that child sexual abuse material is obscene material. For the purposes of any of the crimes set forth in Chapter 12, the age of a person who is depicted or who appears to be depicted in an image and the fact that the person is an identifiable child may be reasonably inferred from the contents of the image or may be established through competent medical evidence or other expert testimony. Under previous law, this rule of evidence only explicitly applied to possession crimes, not to crimes involving the creation or dissemination of prohibited child pornography.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 667

LD 2105, An Act to Update Maine's Mandated Reporting Laws

Sponsored by Representative Meyer

Public Law 2025, chapter 667 replaces the list of mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22 with a list that consolidates categories of mandated reporters and removes some reporters from the list; sexual assault counselors and family or domestic violence victim advocates continue to be mandated reporters.

Chapter 667 also requires that mandated reporters make a report within a 24-hour period and keeps the current statutory structure of mandated reporters in institutions, agencies, or facilities to use the designated agent system, although the person with first-hand information about suspected child abuse or neglect must make the report whenever possible.

Chapter 667 clarifies that a person required to report may seek consultation to determine if a report is required. Although chapter 667 repeals language that states that a person who knowingly violates a provision of the investigation statute regarding interviewing a child without prior notification commits a civil violation, it does not limit the authority of an appropriate licensing board of a mandated reporter to take action for a violation of the mandated reporter requirements in statute.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 697

LD 2192, An Act Regarding School Employee Investigations (former title: An Act to Protect Students by ensuring Schools Have Complete Information About School Employees and Applicants for Employment)
Sponsored by Senator Rotundo

Public Law 2025, chapter 697, which was enacted as an emergency measure effective April 16, 2026, strengthens the duties of school entities and the Department of Education in vetting applicants for school jobs, investigating school employees who have allegedly committed misconduct, and sharing relevant information to protect students and other school employees.

MECASA's LD 2192 Testimony

"Background checks are not always comprehensive and have not always protected children from employees who have caused harm, been discovered, but as part of the system, have been able to move on and harm again. Instead, a thorough and coordinated approach that involves prospective applicants, their current and former employers, prospective employers, and departments of education together can close the loopholes that have allowed those who have committed abuse in one school to abuse again in another."

Chapter 697 expands the definition of "covered investigation" of a school employee to include misconduct that is harassment as described in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 5 337-A; sexual assault as described in Title 17-A, chapter 11; stalking as described in Title 17-A, section 210-A; sexual exploitation of a minor as described in Title 17-A, chapter 12; or similar behavior that endangers the health, safety or welfare of a student or another school employee. This definition captures the misconduct of all school employees and captures misconduct of a school employee against another school employee, as well as misconduct against a student.

Upon receipt of a complaint of alleged misconduct, chapter 697 requires a superintendent to conduct a covered investigation, place anyone who is the subject of a covered investigation on

paid leave and notify the Department of Education that a covered investigation has been started. Once a covered investigation is started, it must be completed, and superintendents must notify the Department of Education immediately of the outcome of a covered investigation.

Upon receipt of notification from a school entity of the initiation of a covered investigation of a school employee, the department shall enter a notation on a school employee's educator credentialing records or other school employee records maintained by the department for that school employee indicating that a covered investigation is pending. The notation must be visible to superintendents and other school administrators authorized to review educator credentialing records and school employee records maintained by the department. Upon receipt from a school entity of the outcome of a covered investigation, the department shall update the notation on the school employee's file. If the school employee is found to have committed the misconduct, the department shall update the notation to reflect that finding; if the school employee is found to have not committed the misconduct, the department shall remove the notation from the file.

Prior to offering employment to an applicant, a school entity must review the applicant's educator credentialing records or other school employee records maintained by the department to determine whether the applicant holds a valid and active certification appropriate for the position or is otherwise eligible for employment and whether any notation regarding a covered investigation has been entered on the applicant's records, and, if so, the current status of that notation.

Notwithstanding any confidentiality clause or any agreement between a school entity and a school employee, if, by a preponderance of the evidence, a school entity determines through its covered investigation that the school employee committed misconduct, the information pertaining to that covered investigation and findings of misconduct must be disclosed to the department and to any school entity that requests that information.

Chapter 697 also directs the department to convene a working group to examine investigation procedures and make recommendations to improve the investigation process. The working group must include certain stakeholders, including MECASA and the Maine Children's Alliance, and is required to submit a report to the joint standing committee having jurisdiction over education matters by January 15, 2027.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 617

LD 2207, An Act Regarding the Statute of Limitations for Certain Sexual Offenses Committed Against Minors

Sponsored by Representative Kuhn

Public Law 2025, chapter 617 eliminates the statute of limitations for prosecution of the crime of aggravated sex trafficking and the crime of commercial sexual exploitation of a minor if those crimes were committed against a victim who had not attained the age of 18 years at the time of the crime.

These changes apply only to criminal conduct occurring on or after September 1, 2026, or for which the prosecution is not barred by the statute of limitations in force immediately prior to September 1, 2026.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 774

LD 1544, An Act to Support Families by Improving the Court Process for Child Protection Cases
Sponsored by Senator Bailey

Public Law 2025, chapter 774, which became law without the Governor's signature January 11, 2026, amends the court process in child protection cases by eliminating as an aggravating factor consideration of whether a parent's rights to another child were previously involuntarily terminated; requiring the court to consider the trauma to the child of removal from the child's home and whether the Department of Health and Human Services exhausted its options to mitigate that harm before removing the child; and at a contested termination of parental rights hearing, requiring the court to explicitly make findings that the department met its statutory obligations to provide reasonable efforts to reunify the child and parent before ordering a termination of the parent's rights.

Public Law Chapter 724

LD 1893, An Act to Establish an Independent Office of the Child Advocate
Sponsored by Representative Gramlich

Public Law 2025, chapter 724 replaces the child welfare services ombudsman contract with an independent Office of the Child Advocate, designed to provide oversight of state agencies and protect the interests of children. The new office will have full access to Department of Corrections and Department of Health and Human Services records, with an 11-member advisory committee and a transition process concluding in 2027.

New Laws Affecting Trafficking Survivors

Public Law 2025 Chapter 513

LD 1871, An Act to Permit Sealing Criminal History Record Information of Victims of Sex Trafficking or Sexual Exploitation
Sponsored by Senator Talbot Ross

Public Law 2025, chapter 513 allows survivors of sex trafficking or sexual exploitation to file a motion to seal their criminal records if the person shows by a preponderance of the evidence that the commission of the crime for which the person was convicted was a substantial result of sex trafficking or sexual exploitation.

MECASA's LD 1871 Testimony

"Traffickers coerce people into illegal activity as a deliberate strategy—once the crime has been committed, they use that behavior to convince the survivor that they are now "too compromised" to seek help or report what's happening. As a result, many survivors of human trafficking carry criminal records that are a direct result of the abuse they endured, and those charges don't go away when the exploitation ends. We cannot claim to care about trafficking survivors while we continue to penalize them for doing what was necessary to survive abuse. We can and should do better by offering them a clean slate, and therefore, the opportunity to thrive with dignity."

Chapter 513 also establishes a civil system of penalties for business entities that share records that are sealed under Maine law. A person who is regularly engaged in the business of collecting, assembling, evaluating or disseminating criminal history record information related to specific individuals for a fee, also called a business screening service, is required to disseminate only complete and accurate records; investigate disputed records; correct or delete records found to be inaccurate or reflecting a criminal conviction that was sealed or pardoned; and provide a notice with disseminated records including the date the record was collected and a notice that information may include criminal records that have been sealed or otherwise have become inaccessible to the public. A person is considered in violation of these provisions only if the person's conduct violates these provisions and also violates relevant provisions of the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 701

LD 2136, An Act to Support Victims of Trafficking in Maine in Response to Funding Cuts

Sponsored by Senator Nangle

Public Law 2025, chapter 710 provides one-time funding in Fiscal Year 2026-27 from the Department of Health and Human Services Purchased Social Services account for anti-trafficking services to support the Preble Street anti-trafficking program.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 696

LD 2168, An Act to Increase Accountability for Persons Engaged in Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking and to Support Victims

Sponsored by Representative Stover

Public Law 2025, chapter 696 provides that a person who committed a crime that caused or contributed to the injury or death for which compensation is sought may receive funds from the Victims' Compensation Fund if that person was a victim of aggravated sex trafficking, sex trafficking, sexual exploitation of a minor, commercial sexual exploitation of a minor or commercial sexual exploitation of a person with a mental disability and the crime committed by that person was the direct result of sex trafficking or sexual exploitation. Chapter 696 also

increases the mandatory fee paid to the Victims' Compensation Fund for a conviction of soliciting a child for commercial sexual exploitation and for a conviction of commercial sexual exploitation of a minor or person with a mental disability.

New Laws Impacting Victims' Rights, Court Processes, and the Legal System

Public Law 2025 Chapter 775

LD 981, An Act to Facilitate the Establishment of an Automated Crime Victim Notification System (former title: An Act to Provide Electronic Notification to Victims of Crimes)
Sponsored by Senator Carney

The purpose of Public Law, chapter 775 is to improve the safety of victims and witnesses by providing them with timely, electronic notification of a defendant's release from custody. Family members, neighbors, and complainants may also register to receive notifications.

Chapter 775 directs county sheriffs, through the Maine Sheriffs Association, to establish an automated crime victim notification system for use in jails, county correctional facilities and regional correctional facilities, which must be designed to provide victims and other registrants the option of receiving automated notices of information available to victims pursuant to Title 17-A, sections 2106 for release or escape of defendants and 2107 for release of defendant on preconviction bail. It directs the sheriffs to convene an advisory committee to support, coordinate and monitor the implementation of the automated crime victim notification system. On or before November 4, 2026, the sheriffs must submit a report outlining the findings and recommendations of that advisory committee to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over criminal justice and public safety matters, which may report out legislation related to the report to the 133rd Legislature in 2027.

Resolve 2025 Chapter 176

LD 1941, Resolve, Establishing the Commission to Examine the Intersection of Parole and Current Sentencing Practices (former title: An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Commission to Examine Reestablishing Parole)
Sponsored by Representative Milliken

Resolve 2025, chapter 176, which became law without the Governor's signature April 26, 2026, establishes the Commission to Examine the Intersection of Parole and Current Sentencing Practices. The commission must examine parole as it currently operates in Maine and in other states, including:

1. How parole fits in with the overall sentencing framework of the Maine Revised Statutes, including the intersection of parole with probation and the supervised community confinement program operated by the Department of Corrections;

2. The consequences of reestablishing retrospective or prospective parole, including an exploration of the laws and experience of any other states that have recently established or reestablished parole; and
3. The decision-making process that should be employed by the State Parole Board, including any training required to ensure parity between sentencing decisions made by the courts and parole decisions made by the board.

The commission must submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over judiciary matters by November 4, 2026, and the committee may submit legislation based on the findings and recommendations in the report to the 133rd Legislature in 2027.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 695

LD 2163, An Act to Enhance Crime Victims' Rights (former title: An Act to Improve the Response to Complaints by Victims of Crime and Enhance Victims' Rights)
Sponsored by Representative Gramlich

Public Law 2025, chapter 695 provides that a victim has a right to receive timely notice and an opportunity to be heard when a party to a court proceeding requests a subpoena granting that party access to certain types of records about or concerning the victim including, but not limited to, the victim's medical records, mental health counseling or treatment records, educational records, electronic device content information and electronic device location information. The attorney for the State is responsible for making a good faith effort to notify the victim of the existence of a subpoena request; the date and time of any proceeding related to the subpoena; and that the victim must be given the opportunity to be heard at that proceeding or hearing when a party to a criminal proceeding seeks a subpoena from someone other than the victim for any record that implicates a privilege or a confidentiality or privacy protection for the benefit of the victim as described in Rule 17A(f) of the Maine 28 Rules of Unified Criminal Procedure.

Chapter 695 also clarifies that, in any court proceeding in a criminal case in which a victim has a right to be heard, the victim may retain an attorney to speak on the victim's behalf or may elect to have a victim witness advocate or victim witness coordinator speak on the victim's behalf. Treatment of the victim may not be affected in any way based on the victim's decision to retain an attorney, except as required to comply with the Maine Rules of Professional Conduct governing attorney communications with persons who are represented by counsel.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 694

LD 2161, An Act to Modify Certain Statutes Governing Revocation of Probation, Victim Confidentiality and the Commissioner of Corrections
Sponsored by Representative Salisbury

Public Law 2025, chapter 694 provides that information from a victim obtained by the Department of Corrections for the purpose of evaluating the ability of a person in the custody

or under the supervision of the department to participate in a community-based program is privileged from disclosure. Chapter 694 adds a cross-reference in a victims' rights statute to a Department of Corrections confidentiality provision.

Chapter 694 also corrects an oversight regarding the need for prosecutor approval for a probation revocation motion and clarifies who may withdraw probation revocation motions and file motions to transfer hearings on probation revocation motions. If a probation officer withdraws a motion to revoke probation, the probation officer must include in the request to withdraw the position of the prosecuting attorney regarding that request.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 526

LD 259, An Act to Establish the Criminal Records Review Commission in Statute

Sponsored by Senator Talbot Ross

Public Law 2025, chapter 526, which became law without the Governor's signature January 11, 2026, establishes the Criminal Records Review Commission, a recommendation of the Criminal Records Review Committee established pursuant to Resolve 2023, chapter 103. The commission members include Legislators, Executive Department commissioners or their designees, and leaders and stakeholders from various organizations, including MECASA. The commission's duties include reviewing laws, rules and procedures pertaining to criminal history record information in this State.

The commission may submit legislation to the Legislature at the start of each regular session and may also make recommendations to the Department of Public Safety, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court, the judicial branch's advisory committee on the Maine Rules of Unified Criminal Procedure, and any other organization or committee whose affairs pertain to the use, maintenance, or dissemination of criminal history record information. The commission may consult with outside experts in fields related to its duties and may seek funding to partially or fully fund its costs.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 528

LD 533, An Act to Allow Residents of the Department of Corrections to Opt in to Additional Restitution for Their Victims

Sponsored by Representative Milliken

Public Law 2025, chapter 525, which became law without the Governor's signature January 11, 2026, establishes a mechanism for offenders to voluntarily make reparations to the victims of their crimes. The Victim Services Coordinator for the Department of Corrections must administer the new Victims' Reparative Account. Deposits to the account are voluntary, and the Victim Services Coordinator must ensure that reasonable efforts are made to locate and notify the victim for whose benefit an offender has deposited money into the account. If a victim opts to claim the money deposited for that victim's benefit, a victim may use the money claimed for any purpose. All records of deposits or claims in the account and the use of the money

deposited are confidential and may not be disclosed except by the victim, or to employees of the department as necessary for those employees in the performance of any official duty.

Resolve 2025 Chapter 146

LD 1965, Resolve, to Establish a Task Force to Create a Court Navigation Program Plan
Sponsored by Senator Talbot Ross

Resolve 2025, chapter 146 was an emergency measure, which became law without the signature of the Governor March 22, 2026. Chapter 146 requires the task force convened by the University of Maine System in the resolve to include at least one representative from the judicial branch and to consult with advocates for persons who are unhoused, for survivors of domestic violence, for survivors of sexual assault and for other identifiable populations who may particularly benefit from a court navigation program. It also requires that the task force recommend a model for a court navigation program designed to be operated, in significant part, by social work students and law students who may earn academic credit for their participation in the program. The task force must submit a report by January 15, 2027, with the recommended model for a court navigation program, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over judiciary matters.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 511

LD 1796, An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Maine Commission on Public Defense Services to Clarify the Types of Cases for Which the Commission Is Responsible for Providing Counsel
Reported by Senator Carney on behalf of the Judiciary Committee

Public Law 2025, chapter 511, which became law January 11, 2026, without the Governor's signature, updates Maine's laws to redefine indigent legal services, shifting financial responsibility for counsel in certain probate and parental rights cases from the Commission on Public Defense Services to the courts. It also prohibits courts from directly assigning commission-employed public defenders to specific cases.

New Laws Impacting Populations at Higher Risk for Experiencing Sexual Violence

Public Law 2025 Chapter 541

LD 2021, An Act to Add an Online Option for Reporting Suspected Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of Adults
Sponsored by Representative Meyer

Current law requires that reports to the Department of Health and Human Services regarding abuse, neglect or exploitation of adults must be made by telephone. Public Law 2025, chapter 2021 adds the option of reporting by an online portal to align state law with federal regulations

promulgated in June 2024 that require states to allow at least two methods of reporting, one of which must be online.

Resolve 2025 Chapter 165

LD 395, Resolve, Establishing the Working Group to Develop Recommendations for Extending Federal Beneficial Laws to the Wabanaki Nations (former title: An Act to Restore Access to Federal Laws Beneficial to the Wabanaki Nations)
Sponsored by Senator Talbot Ross

Resolve 2025, chapter 165 establishes the Working Group to Develop Recommendations for Extending Federal Beneficial Laws to the Wabanaki Nations. The working group must develop consensus recommendations for extending the benefits of federal beneficial laws to the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Mi'kmaq Nation, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, and the Penobscot Nation, notwithstanding Sections 6(h) and 16(b) of the federal Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act. The working group must submit a report by December 2, 2026, to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over judiciary matters that includes the working group's findings and consensus recommendations, including any suggested legislation, and the committee may report out legislation related to the report to the 133rd Legislature in 2027.

Resolve 2025 Chapter 705

LD 785, An Act to Amend Certain Tax Laws Regarding the Wabanaki Nations (former title: An Act to Enact the Remaining Recommendations of the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act)
Sponsored by Senator Talbot Ross

Resolve 2025, chapter 705 specifies that beginning with the First Regular Session of the 133rd Legislature, the Mi'kmaq Nation may, like the other Wabanaki Nations, elect a representative to the House of Representatives of the Maine Legislature.

Chapter 705 also makes several changes to the tax laws, including certain income tax, sales tax, and property tax exemptions for the Wabanaki and Mi’kmaq Nations.

Public Law 2025 Chapter 728

LD 2107, An Act to Establish the Maine Nonprofit Security Grant Program
Sponsored by Representative Brennan

Public Law 2025, chapter 728 establishes the Maine Nonprofit Security Grant Program in the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Maine Emergency Management Agency to provide grants to assist nonprofit organizations to improve security at property owned or occupied by those nonprofit organizations to protect against hate crimes and terror attacks.

Resolve 2025 Chapter 130

LD 1749, Resolve, Directing the Department of Corrections to Study Achieving Gender Equality

Sponsored by Representative Macias

Resolve 2025, chapter 130, which became law without the Governor's signature January 11, 2026, directs the Department of Corrections to study the extent of gender inequality present in the programs, services, facilities, and policies administered or overseen by the department and recommend potential solutions to the joint standing committee having jurisdiction over criminal justice and public safety matters for eliminating gender inequality in the department's programs, services, facilities, and policies.

Final Reflections

As we reflect on this biennium and what a rollercoaster it's been, we're struck by how much of this work was about strengthening the systems that survivors rely on. It was a more technical legislative session than many, focused less on sweeping policy changes and more on building the infrastructure that makes meaningful progress possible—stable funding, stronger accountability, modernized statutes, and practical improvements to how systems respond. These aren't always the most visible victories, but they are the ones that make lasting change possible.

With several long-standing priorities now across the finish line, we're entering the next biennium from a position of greater stability than we've had in years. That creates space to innovate, think bigger, and tackle the next generation of challenges with creativity and ambition. We remain deeply grateful to the survivors, advocates, lawmakers, and partners who made this progress possible, and we look forward to continuing this work together in the years ahead.