

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIRST REGULAR SESSION

ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH LEGISLATURE

Legislative Document

NO. 439

H.P. 340 House of Representatives, February 19, 1987
On Motion of Representative CARTER of Winslow referred to
the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. Sent
up for concurrence and ordered printed.

EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk
Presented by Representative McGOWAN of Canaan.

Cosponsored by Senator CLARK of Cumberland and
Representative REEVES of Pittston.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SEVEN

1 AN ACT to Fund Statewide Community Response
2 Programs to Reduce Spouse Abuse in
3 Maine Communities.
4

5 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as
6 follows:

7 Appropriation. The following funds are appropri-
8 ated from the General Fund to carry out the purposes
9 of this Act.

	<u>1987-88</u>	<u>1988-89</u>
10		
11	<u>HUMAN SERVICES, DE-</u>	
12	<u>PARTMENT OF</u>	
13	All Other	\$250,000 \$250,000

1 Funds to be used to
2 contract with Maine
3 Coalition for Family
4 Crisis Services to
5 create a Community
6 Response Program for
7 spouse abuse.

8 STATEMENT OF FACT

9 It is estimated that 50,000 spouse abuse assaults
10 are committed in this State each year. This State
11 has one of the toughest antispoouse abuse laws in the
12 Nation. The State arrests and prosecutes only a
13 fraction of 1% of those who violate this law.

14 This bill addresses the obstacles to successful
15 enforcement and prosecution of this law in the State.

16 Dramatic new evidence confirms that vigorous en-
17 forcement of a tough law, if it is part of a coordi-
18 nated community response, will significantly reduce
19 the incidence of this crime by preventing new and re-
20 peat assaults. This bill fully funds the establish-
21 ment of a Community Response Program, begun by the
22 112th Legislature. It is coordinated and monitored
23 by the member agencies of the Maine Coalition for
24 Family Crisis Services, which work to overcome the
25 obstacles to enforcement by creating an aggressive
26 coordinated community response to this crime led by
27 the agencies of the criminal justice system. The co-
28 alition is made up of 9 domestic violence projects
29 which divide the State into geographic areas with
30 each project serving one or more counties. The mem-
31 ber projects provide emergency shelter for battered
32 women and their children, 24-hour crisis lines, pro-
33 grams of community education, support groups for wom-
34 en and children, legal information and advocacy, oth-
35 er information and referrals.

36 The Community Response Program is based on a mod-
37 el which has already been demonstrated and proven
38 successful in the State of Minnesota and which has
39 been adapted for this State.

1 The Community Response Program will demonstrate
2 that:

3 1. The enforcement of both the civil and crimi-
4 nal provisions of the State's antispoouse abuse law
5 can be significantly and measurably increased, re-
6 sulting in increased numbers of reports, arrests,
7 prosecutions and convictions for this crime.

8 2. As the result of increased enforcement, the
9 actual incidence of this crime can be significantly
10 and measurably decreased.

11 This bill will continue the 2nd stage of the Com-
12 munity Response Program in the 3 regions of the State
13 which have already completed stage one and provides
14 for the implementation of the first stage in the re-
15 maining 6 regions of the State.

16 The first state of the Community Response Program
17 is the provision of a full-time community response
18 coordinator for each member agency of the coalition.
19 This coordinator provides the initiative, leadership
20 and staff required to identify obstacles to enforce-
21 ment on a local and regional level and to develop and
22 implement a coordinated strategy by the criminal jus-
23 tice system and other community agencies to overcome
24 them.

25 As a group, the coodinators will provide the coa-
26 lition with the initiative, leadership and staff re-
27 quired to identify the statewide obstacles to en-
28 forcement and to develop and coordinate a statewide
29 strategy among the criminal justice system and other
30 community agencies to overcome them.

31 The 2nd stage of the Community Response Program
32 is the provision of new, specialized law enforcement
33 services developed by the coalition for both the vic-
34 tims of spouse abuse and the agencies of the criminal
35 justice system which can overcome specific obstacles
36 to enforcement which have been identified in stage
37 one.

38 For the victim, these law enforcement services
39 include on-call on-scene victim-witness advocacy from
40 immediate post assault response through all phases of

1 enforcement and prosecution, including short-term and
2 long-term followup and specialized, structured
3 educational services focusing on overcoming the damage
4 of the crime and increasing participation in
5 enforcement and prosecution.

6 For the criminal justice system, these services
7 include on-call on-scene victim-witness advocacy ser-
8 vices to police departments on spouse abuse complaint
9 responses; victim-witness advocacy for prosecutors;
10 monitoring, followup and perpetrator education and
11 training for probationers; ongoing, specialized
12 training; and on-call consultation and support for
13 all branches of the criminal justice system.

14 Three-member agencies of the coalition have used
15 funds appropriated by the 112th Legislature to pay
16 for the personnel and support necessary to provide
17 these new law enforcement services in pilot
18 jurisdiction within their service areas. These
19 agencies are: The Family Violence Project in Augusta
20 and Skowhegan, serving Kennebec and Somerset Coun-
21 ties; The Family Crisis Shelter in Portland, serving
22 Cumberland and Sagadahoc Counties; and Caring Unlim-
23 ited in Sanford, serving York County. The 5-county
24 region served by these programs accounts for 50% of
25 the reports of the crime of spouse abuse to state po-
26 lice agencies.

27 The coalition has also used funds appropriated by
28 the 112th Legislature to provide training and techni-
29 cal assistance in these law enforcement services to
30 the remaining 6-member agencies of the coalition in
31 an amount sufficient to insure coordination of its
32 statewide program.

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