



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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May 28, 2026

Sen. Craig Hickman, Chair
Rep. Anne-Marie Mastraccio, Chair
c/o Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability
82 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Hickman and Representative Mastraccio,

We respectfully request that the Joint Standing Committee on Government Oversight investigate the Maine Community Foundation's (MCF) management of funds allocated for victims of the Lewiston mass shooting.

Following the tragedy in Lewiston, the legislature acted swiftly to create a victim's fund and MCF was designated as the fiduciary agent under the Maine Violent Crimes Compensation Act¹ to manage the funds established for providing direct financial support to the victims and their families. As the fiduciary, MCF was responsible for statutorily managing the funds and ensuring they were distributed in accordance with that legal framework.

In total, \$6.6 million was raised from Maine and beyond, with the reasonable expectation that these funds would directly support the victims as intended. In accordance, MCF made commitments to the victims that all the funds would go to them (attached). However, \$1.9 million of those funds raised for the victims was distributed to non-profit organizations that did not provide direct services to the victims. MCF deviated from both statutory requirements of the Maine Charitable Solicitations acts as well as best practices by using one umbrella term for two funds within the victims' fund, diverting resources intended for survivors to 29 non-profits. Of those 29 nonprofits, six members of the MCF steering committee granted funds to their own non-profits, while one grant was awarded to a spouse of a steering committee member. This creates an appearance of deceptive practices, conflict of interest and self-dealing. Unrestricted funds intended for victims were used for pet projects such as renovations at a nonprofit's office. Notably, one non-profit grantee, The Root Cellar of Lewiston, chose to return the funds to victims via the national organization *Victims First*, stating, ". . . funds intended specifically for victims and survivors should remain available to them." Upon returning the funds, the Root Cellar clarified that they told MCF prior to applying that the per their mission, their activities would not provide direct services to victims or their families. Representatives of the Root Cellar stated that MCF encouraged them to apply anyway and MCF granted them those funds.

We believe that both the Victims Fund set up by the legislature and the Maine Charitable Solicitations Act² gives oversight responsibility to the Government Oversight Committee (GOC) regarding the allocation of donations raised for causes as represented to the public. The Charitable Solicitations Act mandates that organizations adhere to the representations made to donors about fund usage. MCF claimed that all funds raised would go directly to the victims; however, a significant portion was diverted to non-profits, resulting in only token support for actual victims—averaging \$29,000 allocated per victim compared to over \$65,000 granted to each of the 29 non-profits.

This situation has re-victimized those affected, who continue to demonstrate financial need due to the tragedy, while also creating confusion regarding the fund's stated purpose. Currently, MCF which has an endowment close to one billion dollars has positioned itself in an adversarial position to the victims rather than compensate the victims as they'd promised.

The handling of this issue raises serious concerns about deceptive practices and conflicts of interest that we believe the GOC is statutorily obligated to investigate.

If we do not investigate this apparent mismanagement of the Victims Fund, we risk eroding public trust in charitable organizations and dissuading future contributions to victims' compensation funds. Immediately following the tragedy, the Maine Legislature moved swiftly to establish the operation of victim funds in statute and bears responsibility for their proper administration to support victims directly.

We respectfully urge the committee to examine this matter closely on behalf of the victims of the Lewiston shooting and, God forbid, potential future victims' compensation funds.

Respectfully,



John M. Eder
State Representative

/s/ Quentin Chapman
State Representative

/s/ Harold "Trey" Stewart, III
Senate Republican Leader

/s/ Matthew Harrington
Assistant Senate Republican Leader

Cc: Representative Chad Perkins

Footnotes:

1. Maine Violent Crimes Compensation Act, 5 M.R.S.A. § 3360 et seq.
2. Maine Charitable Solicitations Act, 9 M.R.S.A. § 5001 et seq.

Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Fund

The Maine Community Foundation has created the Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Fund (the Fund) will distribute 100% of donations as gifts to victims and survivors of the October 25, 2023, shootings at Just-In-Time Recreation and Schemengee's Bar and Grill in Lewiston, Maine. The funds may be used however the recipients wish.

Guidelines determining objective criteria for eligibility, and distribution of funds, will be made by the local Steering Committee following public comment and feedback on the Draft Protocol.

All interested parties should sign up for the Fund's contact list by filling out and submitting the form on www.Mainecf.org/Lewiston. Emails will be sent regarding:

- When the Draft Protocol is published
- How to offer feedback on the Draft Protocol
- When the Town Hall meeting will occur
- When the Final Protocol for the Fund is available
- When the application is available
- When the deadline for submitting an application is approaching

Use this QR code to sign up for the contact list

