

Editorials

Help stop abuse

Tell Maine to pass Cassidy's Bill

Maine residents have a chance to fight against child abuse. They have the opportunity to prevent victims who have no voice from being killed by the silence of others.

On Tuesday, the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee begins to work on a bill that addresses the shocking silence of adults who knew about the recurring abuse of 21-month-old Cassidy Bortner of Rochester, N.H., but did nothing to stop it.

The bill requires Maine residents having knowledge of abuse against children and elderly or incapacitated adults to report the facts to authorities. Until Tuesday, members of the committee are seeking comments from residents about the bill.

It's time for Mainers to speak loudly and clearly against those who would abuse the vulnerable and defenseless. They can give children a voice by contacting their legislators and expressing their support for the proposal known as Cassidy's Bill.

Kassidy died slowly and horribly from unspeakable brutality. Just as horrible is the fact that while the helpless toddler endured this abuse, many people knew it was happening. Many people knew what was causing the bruises covering her body and why she was withdrawn and having a difficult time walking.

Adults in Cassidy's life knew what was going on for six weeks before she died. Yet, no one came to her rescue until she was taken to a hospital in Maine four hours before she stopped breathing. Before that, no one had stepped forward as Cassidy's advocate — not a word had been spoken on her behalf so authorities could finally put a stop to the terror.

Not only must legislators make abuse reporting mandatory, but enforceable civil penalties need to be included, as well. Those who don't step forward to help a child must know they will face consequences.

After Cassidy's Bill is passed, it will be the job of the state and the media to ensure that everyone knows the tenets of the new law just as well as they know how to obey a traffic light.

No amount of legislation will ever bring Cassidy Bortner back, but Cassidy's Bill will help stop the suffering of thousands of children like her.