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**Testimony of Regina Rooney on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence  
In support of LD 1478: “An Act to Improve Women’s Health and Security By Funding Family  
Planning Services”**

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services  
Wednesday, April 19, 2023**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am writing on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)<sup>1</sup> in support of LD 1478, “An Act to Improve Women’s Health and Security by Funding Family Planning Services.”

MCEDV recognizes the important role that the full spectrum of reproductive health care plays for survivors of domestic abuse and violence. In most cases, having a child binds two people together for the long term, even if their relationship ends; sharing custody and co-parenting is a long-term project that is overseen and enforced by the courts. People who perpetrate abuse understand this and frequently use pregnancy as a way of inducing long-term connection, dependence, and compliance. They may coerce pregnancy by damaging contraceptives or refusing to use them, they may commit sexual assault without using protection, or they may simply wait to show their true abusive colors until after their partner has had a child, only then revealing overtly controlling and violent behavior. Given this reality, contraceptive care and abortion must be understood as key tools of safety planning for survivors of domestic abuse and violence.

Maine’s family planning clinics understand these connections and are among our close partners. They have a proven track record of attending to survivors’ experiences by:

- creating policies for how to respond to domestic abuse and violence, both as providers and employers;
- keeping current victim services information on hand for patients in a variety of forms and locations, consistent with best practice;
- regularly screening patients for abuse and violence, and connecting patients with Domestic Violence Resource Center services;

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<sup>1</sup> MCEDV serves a membership of eight regional domestic violence resource centers as well as the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine. Our member programs provided services to more than 12,000 victims of domestic violence in Maine last year, including court advocacy services in the civil and criminal courts.

- creating a welcome and affirming environment for LGBTQ+ people, helping ensure that survivors in this community, who report often being overlooked, are seen and supported; and
- reaching out to Domestic Violence Resource Center advocates for consultation when they want guidance for how they can help a patient.

MCEDV supports the funding request for these programs, particularly given the increasingly unreliable nature of federal Title X funds that have historically supported their work. Maine survivors count on family planning services; we need to ensure that these services remain strong and available to serve our communities. Therefore, we respectfully request you vote “ought to pass” on LD 1478. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important bill.

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