
**Testimony of Regina Rooney on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
In support of LD 616: “An Act to Protect Health Care Professionals Providing Reproductive
Health Care Services”**

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
Monday, May 1, 2023**

Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, I am writing on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)¹ in support of LD 616, “An Act To Protect Health Care Professionals Providing Reproductive Health Care Services.”

MCEDV recognizes the important role that reproductive health care generally, and abortion care specifically, 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. Pregnancy itself is dangerous for survivors; pregnant patients are more likely to die from homicide than any other pregnancy related conditions², and the homicide rate among pregnant and postpartum women in 2020 increased 33% from 2019³. Given this reality, contraceptive care and abortion must be understood as key tools of safety planning for survivors of domestic abuse and violence.

MCEDV supports legislation that will increase Mainer’s access to these critical services, which LD 616 does. Since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* returned abortion regulation to the states, we have already seen how much harder getting an abortion is for countless Americans. Being forced to navigate the confusing, quickly shifting landscape is bad for anyone who needs an abortion. For a survivor who needs an abortion in a state where it is prohibited, and who is trying to plan while also dealing with ongoing surveillance, control,

¹ 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.

and violence from an abusive partner, the stakes are high, indeed.

We must ensure that Maine remains willing, able and ready to provide this critical health care and safety planning option for people. By protecting Maine providers from potential malpractice consequences of serving people from out of state, we make sure that the people who can get here will find the care they need.

As Mainers, we pride ourselves on pulling together for the good of all in times of crisis. Make no mistake: these are times of crisis regarding abortion access. We must do everything we can to be sure that Maine does our part. We therefore encourage you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 616. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important bill.

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