

**Testimony of Amanda Taisey on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
In support of LD 780: “Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Protect
Personal Reproductive Autonomy”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
Monday, January 22, 2024**

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, I am writing on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)¹ in support of LD 780.

Reproductive autonomy plays an important role 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. It is not uncommon for an abusive person to commit sexual assault without using protection. In many cases, abuse escalates after a child is born. Pregnancy itself is dangerous for survivors; pregnant patients are more likely to die from homicide than any other pregnancy related conditions,² and the homicide rate among pregnant and postpartum women in 2020 increased 33% from 2019.³ Given this reality, abortion access and reproductive autonomy must be understood as a key tool of safety planning for survivors of domestic abuse and violence.

A reproductive autonomy amendment would ensure that the rights Mainers have today will be protected in the future. State constitutions are intended to protect fundamental human rights. Though we believe that our State constitution, as written, protects the right to reproductive autonomy, this amendment would make it explicit: *reproductive rights are fundamental human rights*.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on LD 780. I am happy to be a resource to this Committee as you continue your discussions on this proposal.

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¹ MCEDV serves a membership of Maine’s eight regional domestic violence resource centers as well as two culturally specific service providers. Our member programs provided services to more than 12,000 victims of domestic violence in Maine last year.

² Badcom, Emma. “Pregnant women more likely to be murdered than die from other causes.” Oct. 24, 2022.

³ Wallace, Maeve. Trends in Pregnancy-Associated Homicide, United States, 2020. Am J Public Health. 2022 Sep;112(9):1333-1336. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2022.306937. Epub 2022 Jul 7.