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LD 179

Hello. As the CEO and founder of the grassroots nonprofit "Finding Our Voices" hearing from women across Maine every day plagued by domestic abusers, I strongly urge you to NOT approve LD179.

A look at criminal court report in local media in Maine will show that many and sometimes most of the crimes in any given week are domestic violence, including terrorizing and stalking.

It may appear that a Class E misdemeanor is a minor offense. However, with domestic violence in Maine, it is standard for serious physical harm to women to be charged as a misdemeanor offense, and also plead down to misdemeanor status. These misdemeanor crimes are not minor to the victims, inflicting emotional scars that last long after the bruises have faded.

Many, many Maine women live in fear for themselves and their children (and pets) by violent men with multiple violations of probation and conditions of release on their record, including class E misdemeanor charges.

I see time and time again a man at 18 or 19 given a plea deal of no consequences for a misdemeanor assault, only to rack up a 30-page plus criminal record involving felony, violent convictions.

It is a privilege to be released from custody. Anyone released from custody who does not follow the rules for the release needs to know they will be seriously penalized, for any hope they will follow the rules.

Giving a break to those who violate conditions of release is the opposite of what we should be doing in Maine to rein in the public health emergency of violent crime against women.

This bill may be well-intentioned but if it becomes law it will have devastating effects on the safety women and children in Maine, and also the general public and police considering how many police standoffs and shelter-in-place directives stem from domestic abuse.

PLEASE side with victims of crime instead of perpetrators and vote NO on LD 179.