

Ashley Vissers

Regarding ME LD670 An Act to Address Coercive Control in Domestic Abuse Cases

3/1/2025

To Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and the honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Ashley Vissers and I am a survivor of domestic violence in which coercive control was a instrumental part in the abuse. I am writing today to testify on how important it is to for coercive control to be added to the legal definition of abuse to further the protection of Maine citizens who are seeking freedom from their abusers. I am testifying in support of ME LD670.

For 17 years I was the victim of domestic abuse from my father; my mother for over 20 years, my sister for 12. My father was very rarely physically violent, but he was incredibly emotionally abusive - including using forms of coercive control to keep us "in line." He controlled the finances, he would consistently monitor our phone calls and other communications in case we were saying things he didn't want us to say, he would try to isolate us from friends and family he did not like (which was mostly everyone). The worst were the threats and intimidation that were almost daily occurrences. Threats of harm to us, our pets, to himself so that we would be blamed for it. Threats that if we spoke out about his behavior, my sister and I would never see our mother again. He would intimidate us into silence and call us "well behaved" when really we were just terrified for our lives. And while all of that is 100% abuse and I still deal with the ramifications of it to this day, if it's not written in the law as being so, how do you protect the people experiencing it? We were "lucky" in that he was physically violent on the rare occasion which helped my mom secure us a protection from abuse order when we finally escaped from him. Domestic violence victims shouldn't worry that the abuse they experienced is/was enough to get them protection - it is all abuse.

I sincerely hope that LD670 receives the full support of the committee. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to testify.