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Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in support of HP 517 "An Act to Allow a Motion to Extend a Protection of Abuse After Expiration of the Original Order".

As a volunteer with Finding Our Voices, Maine's sister survivor powered domestic abuse and prevention nonprofit organization, I have witnessed first hand the horror survivors experience at the hands of perpetrators. I attended three Protection From Abuse court hearings with a survivor, who experienced significant mental anguish facing her perpetrator in court. Each of the three times we attended the PFA hearings, her perpetrator stared at her, her other supporters, and me with a chilling look. If looks could have killed, we all would have been dead in the courtroom.

This Bill is extremely important in providing the extension of an expired final protection from abuse order if the court finds the lateness of filing is reasonable based on underlying circumstances, or that the filing was not timely due to the inability to serve the defendant.

The survivors should not have to go back to court to go through the PFA process all over again after the original PFA has expired, when underlying circumstances have been determined by the court that created the lateness in filing. In cases in which the the filing was not timely due to the inability to serve the defendant, the survivor should not be penalized by not being able to serve them. An extension should be allowed in those cases, to give more time to be be able to serve the perpetrator. The reason Protection from Abuse orders were created in the first place was to do just that, to protect the plaintiff and their minor child (en) from abuse and harm. This Bill further reinforces the ability of survivors to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Thank you for your time and consideration.