

March 3, 2025

Mary Kamradt
70 Old County Rd
Rockport, MA 04856

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the committee. My name is Mary Kamradt and I am Chief of Staff at Finding Our Voices, the grassroots nonprofit providing peer support and resources to women survivors of domestic abuse in Maine.

I support LD670: An Act to Address Coercive Control in Domestic Abuse Cases.

As a 35-year survivor of domestic abuse that began in my teens, and as a staff member at Finding Our Voices, I am deeply committed to prevention efforts. I believe early education can equip students to recognize the signs of abuse, understand the characteristics of healthy relationships, and potentially deter future abusers. My story may have unfolded differently if I had been educated when I met my abuser. Regrettably, as a 16-year-old, I was unaware of the insidious nature of coercive control and the subtle undermining of my rights and dignity that would ensue for the next 35 years.

My abuser methodically isolated me from family and friends and used intimidation and threats to ensure my obedience. He controlled and sabotaged my finances, forced me into sexual acts against my will and tracked my whereabouts. Any dissent on my part would provoke a violent outburst. He destroyed my belongings, drove erratically to terrorize me, and vividly described how he would end his own life, warning I'd have to live with the guilt. Emotionally, I was conditioned to submit in order to shield myself and my children from potential harm.

After my children became independent, I felt increasingly isolated and lonely. I made friends online which would trigger a shocking ending to our relationship after he set fire to my house while I was in bed. I am fortunate and grateful to be alive today. But perhaps if I'd been educated on the risks and had the support of legislation behind me, I would have navigated the situation differently.

Coercive control is fundamental to domestic abuse. This manipulative behavior aims to create dependency by isolating victims from their support systems, exploiting them, and stripping them of their autonomy. The repercussions of such actions have a profoundly damaging effect on entire families and the broader community.

I believe that collaboration with other organizations and the wider community is crucial for enhancing domestic violence prevention efforts. By joining forces and securing support from our legislators through initiatives like Bill LD670, we can elevate awareness, educate our youth, and promote accountability in addressing the domestic violence crisis in Maine. It is crucial to follow the lead of other states by incorporating coercive control into the definition of abuse and clearly defining coercive control within protection from abuse legislation.

Thank you for your time.

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