

Dana Ward
Biddeford
LD 670

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

I am writing in support of LD 670, "An Act to Address Coercive Control in Domestic Abuse Cases".

As a volunteer with Finding Our Voices, Maine's sister survivor powered domestic abuse education and prevention nonprofit organization, I have heard many stories from survivors of the coercive control that perpetrators used to manipulate the survivors. In some cases it has resulted in survivors doing things that they would ordinarily would not do if it were not for them being coercively controlled; and in other cases, they withdrew from family and support systems, creating an unstable and unsafe household environment. Hearing their stories of how controlled they were in their homes, has forever changed my understanding of the insidious nature of domestic abuse.

It is crucial that courts understand that domestic abuse is not restricted to physical beatings and scars that can be seen. Emotional abuse through coercive control has devastating effects on the psyche of the survivor. What is mentally damaging can also be physically damaging through negative medical manifestations of high blood pressure, heart conditions, stress caused diseases, and other medical issues that are connected to the brain and nervous system.

While this forum doesn't allow for links to websites and presentations, I would encourage you as Legislators, and the general public who are reading this testimony, to Google: "Dr. Steven Hassan - Freedom of Mind - "Coercive Control, Undue Influence, Emotional Abuse and the Law", to further research coercive control.

Please vote yes on this Bill so that coercive control is added to the definition of abuse in existing law, to further protect survivors. Thank you for your time and consideration.