
**Testimony of Andrea Mancuso, on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
In Support of LD 534: “An Act to Clarify the Rights of Crime Victims and Witnesses Regarding
Professional Investigator Communications”**

**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Monday, March 17, 2025**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am submitting comments on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)¹ in support of LD 534.

This bill would ensure that private investigators hired by defense counsel give transparent, accurate information when trying to interview crime victims, and it would require that they stop pursuing an interview if told by the victim to stop. These have both been issues that crime victims have experienced when approached by private investigators.

Multiple victims of domestic violence working with the regional domestic violence resource centers have reported to advocates that a someone had approached them outside their home and told them that they were hired by “the state” to investigate. It turned out that the person claiming to be hired by “the state” was not an investigator with the District Attorney’s Office. Instead, the person had been hired by an indigent defense counsel.

Victims also have reported defense investigators have implied that they must comply with an interview, having been told things like, “If you refuse to talk to me today, I’ll just have to keep coming back until you do.” One victim relayed that the investigator loudly pursued her down her walkway, while she had both arms burdened with grocery bags. She tried to communicate that she didn’t speak a lot of English, but the investigator continued to bark at her that she need to stop and talk to him, following her all the way up her stairs to her front door. She found this encounter incredibly re-traumatizing.

Many victims of domestic violence already constantly evaluate risks and benefits of cooperating with prosecutorial efforts. Being relentlessly pursued by private investigators who

¹ MCEDV represents a membership of the eight regional domestic violence resource centers across Maine as well as two culturally specific service providers. Last year, our programs provided services to more than 12,000 survivors of domestic abuse and violence and their children in our state.

provide less than transparent information about who they are, who they work for, and their purpose is intimidating and discourages victim engagement in the process. LD 534 does not prevent private investigators for criminal defendants from interviewing crime victims, it merely requires them to be transparent about who they are and what their role is, and to stop pursuing the victim if the victim asks them to stop. The only private investigator who could object to those requirements are private investigators who have no intention of being transparent or who intend to continue to pursue contact with a crime victim, even after they've been asked to stop.

Crime victims deserve not to be lied to or misled by professionals working within the system. They deserve to be treated with respect, and to have the right to refuse to speak with defense investigators. MCEDV encourages you to support this reasonable proposal, designed to protect crime victims.

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