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LD 875: An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence

My name is Aspen Ruhlin, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Mabel Wadsworth Center. First, I would like to thank the Chairs Senator Ingwersen and Representative Meyer, along with the rest of the Health and Human Services Committee. Mabel Wadsworth Center is an independent feminist sexual and reproductive health center that has been providing care in Bangor since 1984. Today, we are urging you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 875.

Mabel Wadsworth Center provides a wide range of services, and has provided care to many individuals in our community experiencing domestic violence. As reproductive coercion is a common tool of abuse, it is not surprising that victims in domestic violence situations would need to access care such as STI testing and treatment, contraception, abortion care, and prenatal care. While the care we provide to victims and survivors of domestic violence is essential, it is not enough to get them out of unsafe relationships. This is why domestic violence advocacy organizations and shelters are essential. These support services save lives in Maine every single day.

In the United States, the leading cause of death during pregnancy or shortly after giving birth is homicide.¹ More specifically, it is homicide at the hands of an intimate partner. Though pregnancy and birth carry many medical risks, from sepsis to hypertension to hemorrhage and more, the number one killer of pregnant people is domestic violence homicide. There is much to be done to shift our culture to make perpetrating violence such as this unthinkable; until then, we desperately need the organizations that help those experiencing domestic violence be able to safely leave.

Our communities deserve safety and need the essential support of domestic violence advocacy organizations and shelters, and these organizations need

¹ <https://hsph.harvard.edu/news/homicide-leading-cause-of-death-for-pregnant-women-in-u-s/>

funding to function. These essential support services grant those experiencing domestic violence a chance at freedom, safety, and peace. For these reasons, we urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 875.