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MAINE PROSECUTORS ASSOCIATION
SHIRA BURNS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“An Act to Prevent Dating Partner Abuse by Indicating Dating Partners
in the Scope of Domestic Violence Crimes”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Public Hearing Date: April 11, 2023
Testimony in Support of LD 1461

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Shira Burns and I represent the Maine Prosecutors Association. I am here to testify in support of LD 1461.

The criminal justice system already uses the term dating partner in charging decisions. Currently, if a prosecutor alleges that a defendant and named victim were “dating partners” as defined by 19-A M.R.S. § 4102(4) in certain crimes, probation is then available in sentencing.¹ Probation is often used in domestic violence cases as it serves as a tool to make a defendant accountable to another person (probation officer), often limits contact with the victim, and can require completion of the certified domestic violence intervention program. These are all things we want in the context of dating partner violence.

The expanded use of the term “dating partner” throughout our criminal laws would make it consistent on how we treat all domestic violence crimes and would provide a clearer and more used approach in getting appropriate sentences, specifically probation, and how our laws elevate crimes based on these prior convictions.

This bill recognizes that dating violence is within the larger umbrella of domestic violence and should be treated the same.

For these reasons, the Maine Prosecutors Association is in support of LD 1461.

¹ 17-A M.R.S. § 1802(2).