



The Maine Coalition
to End Domestic Violence

101 Western Ave.
P.O. Box 5188
Augusta, ME 04332-5188
207.430.8334

**Testimony of Francine Stark and Andrea Mancuso on behalf of the
Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
In SUPPORT of LD 1461: "An Act To Prevent Dating Partner Abuse by Including Dating
Partners in the Scope of Domestic Violence Crimes."
Tuesday, April 11, 2023**

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, I am writing on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)¹ to offer support for LD 1461, "An Act to Prevent Dating Partner Abuse by Including Dating Partners in the Scope of Domestic Violence Crimes."

LD 1461 does not create new crimes or criminalize new conduct. It does not change the class of any crimes. It merely appropriately labels the criminal behavior. If a person assaults their dating partner now, current law would have them charged with a Class D crime of assault under Title 17-A, Section 207. This bill would propose that person instead be more transparently charged with the Class D crime of domestic violence assault, under Title 17-A, Section 207-A. If a person stalks their dating partner now, current law would have them charged with a Class D crime of stalking under Title 17-A, Section 210-A. This bill would propose that person instead be more transparently charged with the class D crime of domestic violence stalking, under Title 17-A, Section 210-C. That carries through for all of the crimes in Maine's criminal code that are set out as being explicitly noted as related to domestic violence.

Transparent charging that provides clarity when a crime is domestic violence will ensure that appropriate interventions and restrictions are in place for these offenders and supports are made available for those they have harmed. Where the sentence includes incarceration, this will make it clearer for corrections staff who may need to apply their own response policies around domestic violence. Additionally, it will provide important clarity in our crime data reports to help the state recognize trends and the impact of efforts to increase both accountability for offenders and reduce overall domestic violence crime rates. Our systems are currently able to pull data around the frequency that domestic violence assault is charged in our State (as compared to "regular" assault). Ensuring dating violence is accounted for in that data will provide a more accurate picture.

¹ MCEDV serves a membership of eight regional domestic violence resource centers as well as the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine. Our member programs provided services to more than 12,000 victims of domestic violence in Maine last year.

Most importantly, this bill aligns our laws with the experience of victims. When domestic abuse and violence is perpetrated against a victim by someone that they are dating, it is no less domestic abuse and violence merely because those partners are not married or are not living together. The beliefs held by the person causing the harm, that they are privileged to act in this way, are not different or less problematic. The risks posed to the victim by this set of beliefs being acted upon raises similar public safety concerns. When domestic abuse and violence occurs, our laws should be consistent in recognizing it for what it is. There's a gap in that consistency currently, and LD 1461 appropriately closes it.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important conversation. MCEDV is happy to be a resource to the Committee as you continue to discuss this proposal.

Contact Information:

Andrea Mancuso,
Public Policy Director
Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)
Ph: (207) 430-8334, Email: andrea@mcedv.org