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Testimony on LD911

“An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Certain Law Enforcement Interactions and Tools for Determining Residency During Conflict Resolution”

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, distinguished members of the Joint standing committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. I am representative Rachel Henderson and I represent House District 78 in Oxford County, which covers all of Bethel, Byron, Hanover, Milton TWP, Roxbury, and my home town of Rumford. I am here today to speak on behalf of my bill, LD911, “An act to Amend the laws regarding certain law enforcement interactions and tools for determining residency during conflict resolution.”

This bill is inspired by a tragic event that transpired in the life of one of my constituents last summer, Angela.

Angela is well known in our valley. Someone who is an avid animal lover, athlete, and is one of the first to show up when she hears of someone in need!

Which is no surprise that when she heard of a homeless woman in our town who was in need, she swiftly came forward, invited her into her home (that she has owned for close to two decades) to live with her temporarily.

Angela's generosity quickly became a nightmare just a few weeks later when she returned home from work, to find illegal drug paraphernalia in her home. Not her own, I might add. This crossed a line Angela COULD NOT ignore, and promptly asked the woman to pack her things and leave.

This is where things turn from bad to worse. During the verbal altercation, the woman who was asked to leave, called law enforcement.

Law enforcement arrived and began their investigative questioning. During the questioning process the homeless woman, who we later learned clearly knows DV laws, claimed a domestic partnership and alleged that Angela was violent.

Much to Angelas dismay she was arrested that night, and by the next morning was served with a PFA and told she could not return to the home that she OWNED. Her nightmare was her reality!!

Over the next week, Angels was forced (not by LE, but her desire to see her animals taken care of) to have her cats removed from the home and pay for them to be sheltered. Quite the cost at 5 cats!! She was forced to find housing in the local homeless shelter. Due to the pending DV charges, Angela was suspended from the job she had worked, and excelled at for over a decade. Her whole world was upside down!

Angelas story quickly moved throughout the valley, and there was public outcry. In speaking with Angelas attorney, he was of the firm belief that this matter was resolved much quicker than he typically sees.....and yet it took 55 days for Anglea to be able to return home! 54 Nights in a homeless shelter, when she owned a home just a couple miles from where she lay her head, separated from her companions.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.