
**Testimony of Karen Wyman, on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
In Support of LD 1544: “An Act to Improve Economic Security for Maine Children By
Establishing the Maine Dependent Tax Credit”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation
Thursday, May 4, 2023**

Senator Grohoski, Representative Perry, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation, I am writing on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)¹ in support of LD 1544, “An Act to Improve Economic Security for Maine Children by Establishing the Maine Dependent Tax Credit.”

Most survivors of domestic abuse and violence in Maine experience economic abuse from their partner, and financial issues create real and lasting barriers to survivors separating from the person causing them harm, and child support is rarely paid as ordered by the court.² In response to what we have learned about the prevalence of economic abuse and the barriers to safety and stability it presents, MCEDV and our member programs have built our capacity both to talk to survivors about their financial struggles and to help support survivors in addressing these issues. Through this work with survivors, we have seen time and again how so little goes such a long way.

Through private philanthropy during the pandemic, MCEDV has been able to create and sustain our Liberation Fund, which allows advocates across the state to help survivors with concrete financial needs that a survivor articulates as a barrier to safety. This has included things like: like paying for new tires for their car, so that they can get to work and get their children to school; covering the cost of next semester’s textbooks as they continue their education; paying an overdue credit card bill, so that it doesn’t go into collections and damage their credit; and supporting the cost of getting utilities turned back on. What we have observed through our Liberation Fund program is that just the relatively small amount of financial support that we are able to offer (the average request of our fund is less than

¹ MCEDV represents a membership of the eight regional domestic violence resource centers across Maine as well as the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine. Last year, our programs provided services to more than 12,000 survivors of domestic abuse and violence and their children in our state, which included providing emergency shelter to more than 260 children who fled abuse with their parent.

² See “A Report on the Impact of Economic Abuse on Survivors of Domestic Violence in Maine,” presented to the Maine Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary (February 7, 2019). Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/2Dis9f4>. (81% of respondents cite economic abuse as a barrier to separating from the person abusing them).

\$600 per survivor), can be enough to support a family with no to low income to live and work in their community more safely and with greater stability.

The proposed expansion of Maine's Dependent Tax Credit will work much the same way. We saw this during the pandemic when survivors received the federal Child Tax Credit. Putting just a little more money in a family's hands to spend on the things they need most can be transformational. For so many of the survivors that our network supports, just a little bit of help decreases economic barriers to creating a safe and stable independent household for themselves and their child, away from the person harming them. As policymakers and appropriators look at ways to increase the long-term wellbeing of children in Maine, enacting policies that will best support parents to create safe and stable homes is essential. We urge you to support LD 1544. Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective.

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