

Monday, March 3, 2025

In Favor of **HP 438, LD 670** that adds coercive control to the definition of abuse.

To all members of the committee.

My name is Carla Collinge, and I live in beautiful Thomaston in Knox County.

First, thank you to the courageous sponsors of this bill. I am here to support the amazing team at Finding Our Voices for my family member as she survived horrific treatment at the hands of an abuser.

I am a domestic violence survivor. From a young age, I have seen coercive control at work, keeping the target of such behavior silent, and creating a toxic, dangerous living environment. I heard the gunshot in the next room that took my mother's life. I was removed from that environment only to be subjected to it again.

In July of last year, a female member of my family, was subjected to strangulation multiple times at the hands of an abuser. She was coerced and manipulated and made to do things that she did not want to do. She was isolated from her extended family, and the abuser threatened suicide as one means of control. She had significant injuries from the attack. The abuser is awaiting trial.

A few days later, I was taking care of their child. I heard this beautiful three-year-old scream to me the words the abuser used while he was again and again hurting her. This child replayed the whole thing over and over in his head. I was shocked. I held him for hours while he cried himself to sleep.

Coercive control hurts. It hurts the survivor. It hurts children terribly. It is also an indication for those that care about families. LD 670 is necessary not just to stop the behavior. It will provide a mechanism to allow us to teach children and extended family that this behavior is not okay and to break this cycle of abuse.

Thank you for listening.