



Testimony of Lucia Chomeau Hunt, Esq.  
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**Speaking in Support of LD 665**

**An Act Regarding the Use of Military Protective Orders in Protection from Abuse and  
Protection from Harassment Proceedings  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs**

Date of Public Hearing: March 5, 2025

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs,

My name is Lucia Hunt. I am the directing attorney of the Family Law and Victim Rights Unit at Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Inc., and I am speaking to you today in support of LD 665, An Act Regarding the Use of Military Protection Orders in Protection from Abuse and Protection from Harassment Proceedings.

I have been asked to share the perspective of Pine Tree Legal Assistance on these issues and I am speaking today on behalf of Pine Tree Legal Assistance (Pine Tree). Pine Tree is a nonprofit organization with offices in Portland, Lewiston, Augusta, Bangor, Machias, and Presque Isle. Since 1967, Pine Tree has provided free legal services to low-income people throughout the State of Maine.

Attorneys in Pine Tree's statewide Family Law and Victim Rights unit represent survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In 2024, we represented survivors in 1,326 cases, primarily Protection from Abuse (PFA), family matters, and other civil legal cases related to the violence they have experienced.

This bill's goal is to lower barriers for survivors who already have a military protective order (MPO) and who are seeking additional protection through Maine's courts. Protection from Abuse (PFA) and Protection from Harassment (PFH) orders are an important tool for survivors seeking safety from domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault. This civil process allows a survivor to request a temporary order from the district court on an ex-parte basis, and then return to court for a hearing to request a final order.

This bill adds a definition of a military protective order to the PFH statute and explicitly adds consideration of a military protective order to the standard the court considers when issuing a temporary order in a PFH or PFA.

### **Amendment to the Bill**

Representative Reilly introduced an amendment that removes the proposed changes to the PFA statute in section 7 of the bill. **Pine Tree supports the sponsor's amendment** because the language about the civil rules applying to the PFA statute is an important component of the litigation of protection orders and should not be changed. Additionally, the language regarding the court taking judicial notice of a military protective order is not necessary and could lead to confusion about what plaintiffs need to provide to the court in order to successfully establish the need for a final PFA or PFH order. The other changes proposed in the bill make explicit the court's ability to consider an MPO when deciding whether to issue a temporary order. The amendment removes language that is not needed to achieve that goal.

Thank you to Representative Reilly and this committee. I am happy to answer any questions.