

## Testimony for LD1684 by Patrisha McLean of Camden.

Thank you Sen. Beebe Center, Representative Hasenfus and esteemed committee members. I am Patrisha McLean, founder and CEO of Finding Our Voices, and I am speaking in favor of LD 1684.

I contacted my representative Vicki Doudera about creating this bill in honor of Virginia Cookson of Bangor, when I learned last fall that she was killed and the ex-boyfriend charged with strangling her to death had been out on the streets to be able to do this, due to an early release from prison on a community confinement monitoring program.

This was a preventable death. If this bill had been law last January, Virginia Cookson would be alive to celebrate her 40th birthday, and her 18 year old daughter Karmyn would still have her mother.

Richard Thorpe was sentenced in January 2021 to almost five years in prison for crimes that included a Class B felony domestic violence. He should still be serving that sentence right now. But in February 2024 he was released on the "Supervised Community Confinement Program". This program, "allows a person to serve part of their sentence outside of prison but within strict parameters. The person is still considered to be in custody of the department of corrections." Yet, in April of last year, while Richard Thorpe was "considered to be in custody" in this program, he started dating Virginia.

If he had been **truly** confined which means **inside** the prison and which is the only correct definition for the word "confined", this violent and chronic domestic abuser would not have been able to meet Virginia and woo her.

Thorpe's ex-wife Darcia was the victim of the crimes for which he was serving the prison sentence. She told me on my podcast that when she met him in prison, he was the "sweetest man in the world" and that upon his release, he split her head open twice, broke her ribs, and strangled her: Every time I tried to scream for my kids he squeezed harder" so I could only gurgle.

He also threatened to kill her children and any police that showed up at their house.

She was told by the district attorney's office that if she testified at his trial he could get 25 years in prison. He ended up with less than five years, and the Supervised Community Confinement Program saved him from having to serve even that obscenely short amount of time.

Domestic abusers are the most dangerous criminals in our society.

Anyone paying attention to Maine news will see police standoffs and community stay in place orders sparked by "domestics" erupting over and over again in our neighborhoods, often close to elementary schools and usually including guns.

Half of the murders in Maine year after year for decades are domestic violence, and so far this year at least five women in Maine, a baby, and the state police dog Preacher are dead from domestic violence.

We need to prioritize the women and child victims of domestic abuse, and the safety and well-being of police and the general public, over the rights and freedom of violent domestic abusers.

Domestic violence victims all across Maine are hiding out in their homes because they are terrified of their abuser who is out on bail or early release, and knows where they live. The victim is in prison and the perpetrator is free. What makes this even worse, is when the violent and dangerous domestic abusers are free on the streets they are likely in the dating game, so continuing to lure in unsuspecting victims.

Class A and B felony domestic violence crimes include bodily injury that creates a substantial risk of death, serious permanent disfigurement or loss or substantial impairment of the function of a bodily member or organ; assault with the use of a dangerous and strangulation, and attempted murder.

True confinement and true supervision, and that means INSIDE prison and supervised by jail or prison guards, for sentences that are already too low, is the only way that women and children and the general public can be safe from violent domestic abusers. That is what LD1684 is all about. Thank you for voting YES for this bill and taking this important step to prioritize the safety of women and children, police, police dogs, and the general public, over the rights and freedom of the most dangerous members of our society.