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Testimony of Representative Charlotte Warren presenting

LD 782, “An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Department of Corrections for Certified Batterer Intervention Programming”

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

Senator Deschambault and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am here today to present LD 782, An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Department of Corrections for Certified Batterer Intervention Programming.

Maine’s Certified Batterer Intervention Programs (CBIPs) are a primary mode of intervention in Maine’s criminal justice cases that involve domestic abuse and violence. The 128th Legislature, in providing initial funding for partial reimbursement of program fees for indigent participants in CBIPs, directed the Maine Department of Corrections to study the effectiveness of these programs and report back to this Committee. Over the last two years, MDOC collaborated with the Maine Coalition of Domestic Violence and their member programs to conduct this study and report out the results. We received this report in January 2021. We learned that, in fact, completion of these programs is correlated with a decreased risk of re-arrest compared to those who are referred and do not complete, and that victims tend to feel safer when the participating defendant is enrolled in or has completed the program.

As we have discussed at length in our Committee, it is essential that the state continue to support those criminal justice interventions that are shown to be effective at enhancing community safety and that also respect the capacity of people who have committed a crime to learn from it and to change. CBIPs accomplish both of those goals and warrant our continued support. That is what LD 782 represents. The report we reviewed back in January includes recommendations on how

we can make these programs better attend to the safety of victims of these crimes as well as to the accountability of participants ordered to complete these programs.

I am bringing forward a proposed amendment to the concept draft that primarily does two things. The first thing this amendment does is change how we refer to these programs from Certified Batterer Intervention Programs to Certified Domestic Violence Intervention Programs. This moves Maine towards a growing best practice of labelling behaviors instead of people. Also, by shifting away from “batterer” to “domestic violence,” it better captures the full range of behaviors that these programs are designed to address. The second thing this bill does is to improve information sharing across the board. It does this by requiring the State, in ordering a defendant to participate in an intervention program, to forward a copy of the relevant incident report as well as the victim contact information to that program. This allows the program to better engage with the participant about the underlying reasons that person has been ordered to the program, and it increases the likelihood that the victim is receiving timely and effective notice and connections to critical community supports. The amendment also requires a victim to be notified when a defendant’s probation is terminated early as a result of CBIP completion.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.