

Margaret Libby
South Portland
LD 586

Honorable members of the Maine Legislature,

My name is Meg Libby, and I am here today to testify in strong support of LD 586. This bill is crucial for addressing the serious inadequacies within our current protection order system and for ensuring the safety of domestic violence survivors.

For over a decade, I endured relentless stalking and harassment from my ex-husband, despite having a protection order in place. He systematically exploited the gray areas and loopholes within the existing system, repeatedly violating the order with impunity. I meticulously documented over 75 breaches of the protection order, yet there was no meaningful retribution.

He used coercion and manipulation to continue his campaign of terror, knowing that enforcement was often slow and ineffective. He understood the limitations of the system, and he used them to his advantage. The lack of consistent and meaningful consequences emboldened him, creating a climate where he felt he could act without fear of reprisal.

Instead of my abuser being held accountable, I was the one who suffered the consequences. I was forced to alter my daily routines, restrict my movements, and ultimately, leave the area where I had built my life. I lost my sense of security, my peace of mind, and even my personal liberties, all because the system failed to protect me. I was forced to sacrifice my own life to escape my abuser, rather than him being forced to stop his illegal actions.

The current system places an undue burden on survivors, forcing us to constantly monitor and document violations, and then navigate a complex and often unresponsive legal process. This is unacceptable.

LD 586 offers vital reforms that will:

- * **Strengthen enforcement:** By providing clearer guidelines and increased resources for law enforcement, this bill will ensure that protection orders are taken seriously and violations are met with swift and appropriate consequences.
- * **Close loopholes:** LD 586 will address the gray areas that abusers exploit, making it harder for them to evade accountability.
- * **Prioritize survivor safety:** This bill will shift the focus from placing the burden on survivors to holding abusers accountable for their actions.
- * **Increase accountability:** This Bill would help to ensure that repeated violations are taken seriously and that there are actual consequences for breaking the law.

My experience is a stark reminder of the urgent need for reform. Survivors like myself deserve a system that truly protects us, not one that forces us to sacrifice our own safety and well-being. LD 586 is a crucial step towards creating a more just and equitable system for all survivors of domestic violence.

I urge you to support LD 586 and help protect Maine residents from the devastating effects of stalking and harassment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.