

MCEDV.

Maine Coalition to
End Domestic Violence

My name is Julia Colpitts. This testimony represents The Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence members statewide. I apologize that I am not here to present this testimony in person, however I am out of state.

Survivors of domestic violence and stalking resolve their safety in many ways. Some victims choose to rely on the safety provided by the courts and their local law enforcement. Others choose to take their safety into their own hands. One way that they do that is to choose to carry firearms and sometimes concealed firearms. MCEVD has no judgment about what is the most effective path toward safety. Our job is to represent the survivors whom we serve, including those who choose to bear arms.

Our request in relation to LD 345 is very simple and is two fold. Our first request is that you keep the information about who carries concealed weapons confidential. It does not help a victim at serious risk of violence for her/his abuser to be aware that they have a weapon to protect themselves. Frankly I cannot see any good reason for this information to be public, but certainly not in the case of victims who have fled violence. This leads me to our second request.

If you take the path that this information is to be generally public, then we would request that if this information is not kept confidential for everyone, we at least need a protection for victims who have fled to safety and who need to keep their new locations confidential. Not only is it important for victims who carry to be protected related to their gun ownership, they also are concealing their new locations. Dangerous abusers routinely search for their victims who have fled to other locations. Other major data banks in the state have those protections in place—TANF, the registry of motor vehicles, for example, all have protections for victims who have continued vulnerability either because they have a chronic and dangerous stalker, or who have a sociopathic abuser who will stop at nothing to be sure that they cannot escape their controlling wrath. We are all too aware of victims both in Maine and from away, who have established new, sustainable lives only to be located by their abusers and forced to flee again with their children to a new location. When abusers now know that this database is unprotected, they will have a way to locate a subset of the survivors who have fled. Given that one of the most reliable indicators of extreme risk of lethality or serious assault is the level of fear experienced by the victim—and the corollary that these may be the most likely to obtain a firearm—it is particularly important that their anonymity is protected.

Thank you for your attention to the protection of vulnerable victims in our state.
Submitted,

Julia Colpitts