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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1178 Peace Orders and Protective Orders – Coercive Control

The Duluth Domestic Violence Power and Control Wheel is a great tool to help victims of abuse to understand the Power and Control Dynamic. Although the perimeter of the Wheel represents those forms of abuse (Physical and Sexual) which seem to be most often in the public eye, the inner workings of the Wheel outlines the many forms that abuse can take. For those suffering from coercive control, Control is at the core of the abuse cycle. More to the point, the strategies and methods abusers implement are among the “spokes” that represent the victimization of those who have lost their ability to live without fear of reprisal, domination, intimidation, isolation and economic and emotional abuse.

Coercive control robs the victim of their power to make decisions about something as simple as what to wear, how to talk, and what time to go to and from daily activities. “Life” for the coercively-controlled abuse victim gradually becomes so confining and manipulated that the abuser has all the power over them; the victim has no personal freedom whatsoever. The home, in fact, becomes a form of confinement and isolation from others--- a prison for the victim to keep them under control.

Victims of coercive control often have no physical signs of abuse. They frequently don’t have bruises, cuts and broken bones. They are told when, how and why to do something. Sometimes their food is withheld because they did not comply with some controlling edict. Their activities on

the phone or computer are thoroughly scrutinized and sometimes cut off completely. Email, text and social media are often forbidden as it represents an avenue of communication with the outside world the abuser cannot fully control. They simply have no autonomy. Imagine living that way day to day. Someone tells you how, when and where you can go and if you fail to follow the edicts there are severe consequences.

Control is the key here... no freedom of expression, freedom of thought or self-determining actions. The very civil rights we have as individuals are stripped from the abused and replaced with the agenda of the abuser. Personal freedom belongs to the abuser alone. However, given the many manifestations of control, the current amendment to the HB1178 gives the Court a beginning list of what constitutes COERCIVE CONTROL so that the meaning is narrowed and more defined. The amendment language, as implemented, is taken from Connecticut statute that was enacted in 2021.

HOUSE BILL 1178 recognizes the domination and control of the victim through coercive behavior that strips the abused of their ability and freedom to make self-effectuating decisions. HB 1178 recognizes coercion as abuse and gives the victim an outlet to seek escape from the controlling behaviors that rob them of their own self will and provide them with a path to escape their abuser.

PLEASE ENTER A FAVORABLE REPORT FOR HB 1178



HB1178/243526/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

07 MAR 22
10:06:12

BY: Delegate McComas
(To be offered in the Judiciary Committee)

AMENDMENT TO HOUSE BILL 1178
(First Reading File Bill)

On page 2, in line 2, after “(b)” insert “(1)”; in lines 4, 5, and 6, strike “(1)”, “(2)”, and “(3)”, respectively, and substitute “(I)”, “(II)”, and “(III)”, respectively; and after line 8, insert:

“(2) “COERCIVE CONTROL” INCLUDES:

(I) ISOLATING AN INDIVIDUAL FROM RELATIVES, FRIENDS, OR OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT;

(II) DEPRIVING AN INDIVIDUAL OF BASIC NECESSITIES;

(III) CONTROLLING, REGULATING, OR MONITORING AN INDIVIDUAL’S MOVEMENT, COMMUNICATION, DAILY BEHAVIOR, FINANCES, ECONOMIC RESOURCES, OR ACCESS TO SERVICES;

(IV) COMPELLING AN INDIVIDUAL BY FORCE, THREAT, OR INTIMIDATION BASED ON ACTUAL OR SUSPECTED IMMIGRATION STATUS TO ENGAGE IN CONDUCT FROM WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL HAS THE RIGHT TO ABSTAIN OR ABSTAIN FROM CONDUCT THAT THE INDIVIDUAL HAS A RIGHT TO PURSUE;

(V) COMMITTING OR THREATENING TO COMMIT CRUELTY TO ANIMALS THAT INTIMIDATES AN INDIVIDUAL; AND

(VI) FORCING SEX ACTS OR THREATENING ACTS OF A SEXUAL NATURE, INCLUDING THREATS BASED ON AN INDIVIDUAL'S SEXUALITY OR THREATS TO RELEASE SEXUAL IMAGES."