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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1069**  
**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 outline 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.

Hammering out a definite meaning for “Coercive Control” has taken the input of many legal professionals, ultimately resulting in the legal definition as recorded in Maryland Rule 9-205 (December 2022): [A] a pattern of emotional or psychological manipulation, maltreatment, threats of force or intimidation used to compel an individual to act or refrain from acting against the individual’s will.” Our judges now have the criteria as outlined in the newly promulgated definition they need to order a protective order on behalf of a domestic violence victim in such a controlling situation.

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 do not 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. 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.

**HOUSE BILL 1069** 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 1069** 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 1069**