

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act To Improve the Protection from Abuse Laws

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 17-A MRSA §1201, sub-§1, ¶A-1, as amended by PL 2005, c. 265, §7, is further amended to read:

A-1. The conviction is for a Class D or Class E crime other than:

(1) A Class D or Class E crime relative to which, based upon both the written agreement of the parties and a court finding, the facts and circumstances of the underlying criminal episode giving rise to the conviction generated probable cause to believe the defendant had committed a Class A, Class B or Class C crime in the course of that criminal episode and, as agreed upon in writing by the parties and found by the court, the defendant has no prior conviction for murder or for a Class A, Class B or Class C crime and has not been placed on probation pursuant to this subparagraph on any prior occasion;

(2) A Class D crime committed against a family or household member, a dating partner or a victim of sexual assault or stalking under chapter 9 or 13 or section 506-B, 554, 555 or 758. As used in this subparagraph, "family or household member" has the same meaning as in Title 19-A, section 4002, subsection 4; "dating partner" has the same meaning as in Title 19-A, section 4002, subsection 3-A; "victim of sexual assault or stalking" means a person who has been a victim of conduct defined as stalking in section 210-A or described as sexual assault in chapter 11 committed by someone other than a family or household member or dating partner;

(3) A Class D or Class E crime in chapter 11 or 12;

(4) A Class D crime under section 210-A;

(5) A Class D or Class E crime under section 556, section 854, excluding subsection 1, paragraph A, subparagraph (1), or section 855;

(6) A Class D crime in chapter 45 relating to a schedule W drug; or

(7) A Class D or Class E crime under Title 29-A, section 2411, subsection 1-A, paragraph B.

Sec. 2. 19-A MRSA §4002, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 1995, c. 694, Pt. B, §2 and affected by Pt. E, §2, is amended to read:

1. Abuse. "Abuse" means the occurrence of the following acts between family or household members or dating partners or by a family or household member or dating partner upon a minor child of a family or household member or dating partner:

A. Attempting to cause or causing bodily injury or offensive physical contact, including sexual assaults under Title 17-A, chapter 11, except that contact as described in Title 17-A, section 106, subsection 1 is excluded from this definition;

B. Attempting to place or placing another in fear of bodily injury through any course of conduct, including, but not limited to, threatening, harassing or tormenting behavior;

C. Compelling a person by force, threat of force or intimidation to engage in conduct from which the person has a right or privilege to abstain or to abstain from conduct in which the person has a right to engage;

D. Knowingly restricting substantially the movements of another person without that person's consent or other lawful authority by:

(1) Removing that person from that person's residence, place of business or school;

(2) Moving that person a substantial distance from the vicinity where that person was found; or

(3) Confining that person for a substantial period either in the place where the restriction commences or in a place to which that person has been moved;

E. Communicating to a person a threat to commit, or to cause to be committed, a crime of violence dangerous to human life against the person to whom the communication is made or another, and the natural and probable consequence of the threat, whether or not that consequence in fact occurs, is to place the person to whom the threat is communicated, or the person against whom the threat is made, in reasonable fear that the crime will be committed; or

F. Repeatedly and without reasonable cause:

(1) Following the plaintiff; or

(2) Being at or in the vicinity of the plaintiff's home, school, business or place of employment.

Sec. 3. 19-A MRSA §4002, sub-§3-A is enacted to read:

3-A. Dating partners. "Dating partners" means individuals currently or formerly involved in dating each other, whether or not the individuals are or were sexual partners.

Sec. 4. 19-A MRSA §4005, sub-§1, as enacted by PL 1995, c. 694, Pt. B, §2 and affected by Pt. E, §2, is amended to read:

1. Filing. An adult who has been abused by a family or household member or a dating partner may seek relief by filing a complaint alleging that abuse.

When a minor child in the care or custody of a family or household member or a dating partner has been abused by a family or household member or a dating partner, a person responsible for the child, as defined in Title 22, section 4002, subsection 9, or a representative of the department may seek relief by filing a petition alleging that abuse.

An adult who has been a victim of conduct defined as stalking in Title 17-A, section 210-A or described as sexual assault in Title 17-A, chapter 11, whether or not the conduct was perpetrated by a family or household member or dating partner, may seek relief by filing a complaint alleging that conduct without regard to whether criminal prosecution has occurred. When a minor has been a victim of such conduct, the minor's parent, other person responsible for the child or a representative of the department may seek relief by filing a petition alleging that conduct.

Sec. 5. 19-A MRSA §4007, sub-§1, as amended by PL 2005, c. 510, §§10 to 12, is further amended to read:

1. Protection order; consent agreement. The court, after a hearing and upon finding that the defendant has committed the alleged abuse or engaged in the alleged conduct, may grant a protective order or, upon making that finding, approve a consent agreement to bring about a cessation of abuse or alleged conduct. This subsection does not preclude the parties from voluntarily requesting a consent agreement without a finding of abuse. The court may enter a finding that the defendant represents a credible threat to the physical safety of the plaintiff or a minor child residing in the plaintiff's household. Relief granted under this section may include:

A. Directing the defendant to refrain from threatening, assaulting, molesting, harassing, attacking or otherwise abusing the plaintiff and any minor children residing in the household;

A-1. Directing the defendant not to possess a firearm or other dangerous weapon for the duration of the order;

A-2. Prohibiting the defendant from the use, attempted use or threatened use of physical force that would reasonably be expected to cause bodily injury against the plaintiff or a minor child residing in the household;

B. Directing the defendant to refrain from going upon the premises of the plaintiff's residence;

C. Directing the defendant to refrain from repeatedly and without reasonable cause:

(1) Following the plaintiff; or

(2) Being at or in the vicinity of the plaintiff's home, school, business or place of employment; or

(3) Engaging in conduct defined as stalking in Title 17-A, section 210-A;

- D. Directing the defendant to refrain from having any direct or indirect contact with the plaintiff;
- E. When the mutual residence or household of the parties is jointly owned or jointly leased or when one party has a duty to support the other or their minor children living in the residence or household and that party is the sole owner or lessee:
- (1) Granting or restoring possession of the residence or household to one party, excluding the other; or
 - (2) A consent agreement, allowing the party with the duty to support to provide suitable alternate housing;
- F. Ordering a division of the personal property and household goods and furnishings of the parties and placing any protective orders considered appropriate by the court, including an order to refrain from taking, converting or damaging property in which the plaintiff has a legal interest;
- F-1. Ordering the termination of a life insurance policy or rider under that policy owned by the defendant if the plaintiff is the insured life under the policy or rider. Upon issuance, a copy of the court order must be sent to the insurer that issued the policy;
- G. Either awarding some or all temporary parental rights and responsibilities with regard to minor children or awarding temporary rights of contact with regard to minor children, or both, under such conditions that the court finds appropriate as determined in accordance with the best interest of the child pursuant to section 1653, subsections 3 to 6-B. The court's award of parental rights and responsibilities or rights of contact is not binding in any separate action involving an award of parental rights and responsibilities pursuant to chapter 55 or in a similar action brought in another jurisdiction exercising child custody jurisdiction in accordance with the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act;
- H. Requiring the defendant to receive counseling from a social worker, family service agency, mental health center, psychiatrist or any other guidance service that the court considers appropriate. The court may not order and the State may not pay for the defendant to attend a batterers' intervention program unless the program is certified under section 4014;
- I. Ordering the payment of temporary support for the dependent party or for a child in the dependent party's custody in accordance with chapter 63, or both, when there is a legal obligation to support that dependent party or that child, or both;
- J. Ordering the payment of temporary support payments to the State as provided in chapters 63 and 67;

K. Ordering payment of monetary compensation to the abused person for losses suffered as a direct result of the abuse. Compensatory losses are limited to loss of earnings or support, reasonable expenses incurred for personal injuries or property damage and reasonable moving expenses. Upon the motion of either party, for sufficient cause, the court may set a later hearing on the issue of the amount of damages, if any, to be awarded;

L. Ordering the defendant or, if the complaint is dismissed, the plaintiff to pay court costs or reasonable attorney's fees;

M. Entering any other orders determined necessary or appropriate in the discretion of the court; or

N. Directing the care, custody or control of any animal owned, possessed, leased, kept or held by either party or a minor child residing in the household.

If the court enjoins the defendant under this subsection and the enjoined conduct constitutes harassment under Title 17-A, section 506-A, the court shall include in the order a warning in conformity with Title 17-A, section 506-A.

SUMMARY

This bill allows current and former dating partners, whether or not sexual partners, and stalking and sexual assault victims to seek relief under the protection from abuse laws.