

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1740-FN

House Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee

January 16, 2026

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Destinie Berard. I am submitting this written testimony in support of HB 1740.

On September 12, 2023, I provided legislative testimony before the House Special Committee on the Family Division of the Circuit Court, along with Lindsay Smith and her mother Cindy Smith. I respectfully ask that you watch that testimony:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0uV8vCq5-Y&t=504s>

I reiterate that testimony today – in support of HB 1740. Additional information about my case, and Lindsay’s case, was provided to the committee at today’s hearing. Please read it.

I want to tell you something that isn’t in the official record. Lindsay Smith is my very good friend. We met because of this broken system. She survived being shot in the head by her abuser – after a judge told her she hadn’t been abused. I spent seven years under a protective order obtained against me by *my* abuser – a police officer who filed his petition the same day his own department disciplined him for his conduct toward me. We found each other through online support groups for victims of the NH court system.

After I testified before the legislature in 2023, I was arrested for violating the protective order. My crime? I went to church. The alleged violation was almost two years old when they came for me – and they made sure to arrest me on a Friday so I’d sit in jail until Monday. Lindsay showed up at my court hearings. She sat in the gallery, just to be there for me.



Left: Lindsay at my court hearing. Right: With Lindsay and Cindy Smith picking me up from jail.

On July 17, 2025, I was found NOT GUILTY. But I was still arrested, still jailed, still dragged through criminal court for over a year – for an order that should never have existed in the first place.

When we testified in 2023, nothing happened. Now you have a bill before you. HB 1740 would fix the statute that did this to both of us – to Lindsay and to me. Please pass it.

Sincerely,

Destinie Berard,
Georgetown, Massachusetts