

To the members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to give my testimony in support of SB 1060. When I was a teenager, I was groomed into an abusive relationship with a man. In the beginning, he was nice, charming, and I never thought he would hurt me. He entertained my friends and family. He seemed encouraging. He wanted me to see myself in a different way. He moved very fast in our relationship, telling me I was his soulmate and that we should move in together just shortly after we started dating.

The longer we were together, the more he slowly chipped away at my freedoms. He had me trapped before he ever became physically abusive.

He started sabotaging my relationships with friends and family by becoming irate and inconsolable when I had contact with them. He often monitored when I ate and when I slept, sometimes resulting in no sleep or food for days on end, which weakened and disoriented me. He became obsessed with how I looked, and there were certain things I wasn't allowed to wear. He would not allow me to pay for anything, which at first seemed romantic, but after we moved in together, I realized it was a trap. I had no rights to anything. He wouldn't allow me to pay my share of the rent. He could throw me out at any time. He threatened my reputation by taking photos of my naked body and at times threatened to release them publicly without my consent, which I later came to understand is illegal and called 'revenge porn'. He hacked into my phone and social media accounts so I could not reach out for help. He was monitoring me.

The various types of coercion used in coercive control, whether they are monitoring conversations, financial control, sexual violence, or outright threats against victims and the victims' families. On their own, these things are already dangerous and scary, but multiple forms of isolation and control against one person can be deadly. These things didn't happen all at once, but once they were in place and I had been successfully trapped, the sexual and physical abuse became severe.

If I had been educated about coercive control, I may have been able to spot the signs. I would have been more aware of my civil liberties slowly being stripped away. People who exert this kind of control over someone are masterful at it. Isolation and control are how people who harm clear the pathway for violence because they know it makes it increasingly more difficult for a victim to escape. It is also important to allow the actions of the abusers to speak for themselves, as perpetrators of coercive control are by definition manipulative, so the burden of proving the intention should not be on the victim. Instead, the pattern of controlling and isolating behavior should be looked at in its totality.

In my opinion, it's hard to understand domestic violence without also understanding coercive control. Too often I have read stories of people describing coercive control as a precursor to

physical violence or homicide but nothing being done until irreparable harm has occurred or the victim is dead.

I believe strengthening our knowledge of coercive control can save lives.

Thank you for listening today.

Evan Rachel Wood