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**Testimony of James F. Papillo, State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
Friday, February 24, 2006**

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is James Papillo and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

Raised House Bill No. 5211, An Act Concerning Underage Drinking
(SUPPORT)

and

Raised Senate Bill No. 156, An Act Concerning Court Operations **(SUPPORT WITH RECOMMENDATION TO AMEND)**

As the State Victim Advocate, I strongly support efforts to reduce underage drinking including holding those minors who possess alcohol on public or private property accountable for their actions. According to the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, the median age at which children begin drinking is 13. Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21.

Far too many incidents of underage drinking have occurred in which the outcome has been the worst possible scenario for a parent to face. Many promising young lives have been needlessly lost as a result of underage drinking. Raised House Bill No. 5211 attempts, in part, to discourage many adults from hosting a house party or other event where alcohol may be available to minors and holds those who provide alcohol to our youth accountable. As parents, we want our children to be safe and are sometimes willing to provide a "safe environment" to condone underage drinking. The simple truth is that there is no such thing as a "safe underage drinking party." I strongly urge the committee to support this effort to reduce underage drinking and protect our young people.

While I am not opposed to the proposed change to Section 1 of Senate Bill No. 156, I would strongly recommend that particular language removed from this section during the 2005 legislative session be reinserted. Specifically, Section 1 of Senate Bill No. 156 should be further amended to include language that would require that law enforcement agencies receive, in addition to the restraining order itself or the information contained in such order, a copy of the sworn affidavit submitted by the victim to request the issuance of a restraining order.

Depending on the facts and circumstances of the particular case, the safety of victims of domestic abuse and of law enforcement officials who respond to calls for help from such victims could be greatly enhanced by providing police departments with the information contained in the affidavit. Typically, the more information police officers have at their disposal when arriving at the scene of a crime, the better. Our law enforcement officials should not be information starved—particularly when responding to domestic violence calls. For example, information contained in the affidavit may include information regarding whether the respondent owns or has possession of guns as well as the likely physical location of such guns. Other information which may be contained in the affidavit such as the history and pattern of abuse; whether the respondent has alcohol or drug-related problems.

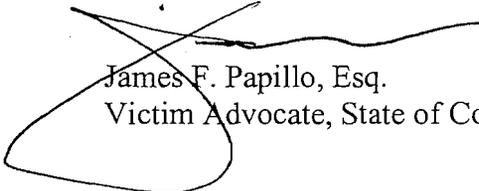
To maximize the safety of victims of domestic and family violence crimes and of law enforcement officials, the information contained in both the restraining order and the sworn affidavit should be made available to law enforcement agencies. Again, the information contained in these documents, most especially in the affidavit, can include valuable information—information that can save lives.

Therefore, I respectfully request that Section 1 of Raised Senate Bill No. 156 be amended such that, in addition to receiving a copy of the restraining order or information contained in the order presented in some format other than the order itself, law enforcement officials also receive a copy of the sworn affidavit submitted by the victim along with the application for the restraining order.

My specific amendment I am proposing is as follows:

On line 25 of Raised Bill No. 156, following “served,” insert the following text: “a copy of the applicant’s affidavit”.

Thank you for considering my testimony.



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