

March 20, 2006

Dear Judiciary Committee:

I would like to thank the judiciary committee for allowing me to comment on **House Bill No. 5799, an Act Concerning Crime Victims and the Victim Advocate**. I also want to apologize for not being able to testify in person. Unfortunately, I am attending a Welfare Advocacy Conference in DC this week.

This bill is personally important to me for many reasons. As the President and CEO of Career Resources, Inc., a non-profit in Bridgeport, Connecticut, I often advocate for welfare recipients, people with disabilities, offenders and other at-risk populations.

Currently, my agency is under contract by the State of Connecticut Court Support Services Division to operate the Alternative Incarceration Center for the Bridgeport Courts, as well as to provide gender specific programming for women that have been involved in the court system.

My professional experience and human service training has prepared me well to work with offenders and help them to be contributing members of society. But unfortunately, my professional training never taught me about being a victim.

That all changed on a hot summer night in August of 2004. A close friend and neighbor was arrested outside of my home for videotaping my wife as she prepared for bed. As the process unfolded we learned quickly of the subsequent acts that were caught on tape. We also learned that his obsession lasted for years. But what was even more disturbing is that the forensic lab learned that this man was a member of multiple websites that promoted stalking, videotaping, raping and killing woman. The man also had in possession several tapes that depicted such acts.

Angry, broken hearted, and in shock, I convinced my wife that the judicial process will prosecute this neighbor and he will be penalized for these abhorrent acts. I assured her that they caught him and **they will** prosecute. This assurance left little comfort in my wife. The neighbor's act of betrayal swiftly eliminated my wife's ability to live. He not only took pictures of my wife, he took my wife. She is no longer the person that she was prior to this act. She has little self-esteem, no motivation to live or desire to fight, and if this wasn't bad enough he destroyed my two little girl's mother. Things that my children use to do together with my wife are only memories. My wife will not go outside with the children or get them involved in after school activities, for fear of being watched and/or meeting new people. She does not speak to anyone outside of our family. She will not travel or shop alone. She must be accompanied by me or another family member. My wife is suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and is currently on disability.

While this may be bad enough, the judicial process also failed us. Because this person did not have any prior arrests, he was able to plead guilty to a class "D" misdemeanor

and was sentenced to 30 day's house arrest and 18 months probation. Most importantly, a protective order was not issued!

To this day, my wife constantly lives in fear. Just this morning, my wife called me at work and was in tears. She was laboring over the thought that this neighbor may someday find her and kill her. My assurances, as before, left her with little comfort.

But this Bill today, if passed may be able to give other people some assurance. Section 3 of the Bill specifically authorizes Superior Court Judges to issue a protective order in any criminal case involving the use, attempted use or threatened use of physical force against another person where the judge determines that such an order may be necessary for the protection of the crime victim, even in cases where there is no familial relationship between the crime victim and the accused.

I strongly encourage the committee pass this Bill 5799. Not because of what happened to me, but what could happen to you.

Respectfully submitted,

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