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To: Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Linda Blozie, Director of Public Affairs

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: February 26, 2007

Re: House Bill 6286- AN ACT CONCERNING PARENTING TIME AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY WITH RESPECT TO THE CUSTODY OF A MINOR CHILD

Good afternoon, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and distinguished members of the Judiciary. My name is Linda Blozie and I am the Director of Public Affairs for the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. I am here today to oppose House Bill No. 6286 - AN ACT CONCERNING PARENTING TIME AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY WITH RESPECT TO THE CUSTODY OF A MINOR CHILD as it relates to victims of domestic violence.

There is a general agreement that shared custody has many advantages when both parties have financial resources and a partner who is not abusive. This type of arrangement can and should permit and foster continuity in the child's relations with both parents. The concept recognizes two committed parents in separate homes caring for their child in an atmosphere of civilized, respectful exchange. Each parent needs to be responsible for and genuinely concerned with the well-being of the

child. Shared custody works best when both parents respect each other's parenting abilities, value the contribution each makes to the child's life, and are not at war with each other.

Yet, in any given custody case, domestic violence may be present. Whenever considering the best interests of a child, domestic violence in the home should always be a determining factor. Children witnessing domestic violence are more likely to do poorly in school, use alcohol and/or drugs, are more likely to exhibit behavioral or physical health problems and ultimately continue the cycle and become either perpetrators or victims. Parental separation or divorce does not necessarily end violent and abusive behavior. Joint custody and visitation situations can continue to expose children to abuse. Children end up being pawns in an abuser's attempt to gain control.

Before passing this bill, I would ask you to keep in mind that 1) domestic violence shall be considered in any child custody or visitation case and 2) that the award of custody to any perpetrator of domestic violence may violate any valid order of protection in the state of Connecticut.

Witnessing abuse towards one parent is not in the best interest of any child. Thank you.