

JULIE PORZIO STATEMENT
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
REGARDING COURTHOUSE SECURITY
MARCH 12, 2007

Good afternoon Chairman Lawlor and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee

I would like to thank Senator Joan Hartley and Representative Anthony D'Amelio for yielding their time to me and also thank Representative David Labriola for co-sponsoring this important bill.

It is a pleasure to be with you to address this committee and have the opportunity to contribute what I have learned through the tragic events of June 15, 2005 to this important issue of courthouse security.

The divorce case in which I was involved originated in Litchfield Superior Court and was transferred to the Middletown Regional Trial Family Docket where all highly contested custody cases, which by their very nature are volatile and breed hostility, are assigned for trial.

At this time we know of six "red flags" occurring before the shooting on June 15, 2005, but documented only after the shooting took place. There are indications of at least two other attempts, unreported and undocumented, where Mr. Bochicchio attempted to breach court security and bring a weapon into the courthouse. Each of these incidents would have alerted adequately trained marshals to report the conduct which in turn would have precipitated appropriate preventive and protective measures.

Mr. Bochicchio had previously attempted to enter the courthouse with a pocket knife, a hand cuff key, and various other prohibited recording devices. Most significantly, on May 26, 2005, he attempted to enter the courthouse with a pocket knife, a concealed hand cuff key **and a gun**. He flashed his retired Connecticut State Police badge to the screening Judicial Marshal as if he were still on active duty, and stated that he was at the court on business. The Judicial Marshal had been previously told that Mr. Bochicchio was retired from the State Police and was at the court "on a highly contested divorce matter", NOT official business. Clearly he had used this tactic in the past.

Even though Michael Bochicchio committed a crime by impersonating an active duty state police officer, and tried to bring a gun into the courthouse, no action was taken to either detain him, confiscate the weapon, or inform the Chief Administrative Judge, the trial Judge, my client, or myself of this dangerous and unacceptable behavior. No incident reports were generated to document these clearly disturbing events, until WEEKS after the shooting. It is important to note that this behavior of attempting to bring a gun into the court on May 26, 2005, occurred just before the afternoon trial session was to commence. Clearly, Michael Bochicchio went to his vehicle during the

court break and armed himself with a gun – the Marshals should have immediately recognized this deliberate, dangerous and irrational behavior.

In this case, the system failed because of human error. Our Marshals are dedicated and well meaning public servants. However, it is essential they receive more intensive, relevant and comprehensive training. The bedrock requirement for safety in our courts begins with well trained Marshals. In this case, had the Marshals taken note of the observed peculiarities in Mr. Bochicchio's conduct, and if the Marshals implemented the system that required them to report these peculiarities immediately, this tragedy would have been averted. They failed to review and assess these actions immediately and also failed to utilize the chain of command as the Marshal's Manual requires.

For the past 15 years, I have been practicing divorce and matrimonial law. The Courts, my colleagues, and I are acutely aware of the emotional intensity commensurate with family and custody cases. Domestic violence that spills over into the courthouse has become a national concern, and much more prevalent. I am hopeful this legislation will ensure that proper measures will be taken to secure the safety and welfare of all who enter a courthouse facility. Further, the legislation will only be effective if it is enforced and monitored by adequately **trained** security personnel.

My client, Donna Bochicchio was a kind, and loving person and wonderful mother, who was drawn into this divorce proceeding but was not provided the basic protection for her physical safety. Her death is a testament to the inadequacy of courthouse security as it presently exists and should heighten awareness of the significance of this most vital legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee and for your consideration of this important and necessary Bill.