



To: Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Lisa Holden, Executive Director of CCADV

Date: September 11, 2007

Representative Lawlor, Senator McDonald and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Lisa Holden and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV). I am here today to speak on behalf of the newly formed Governor's Sentencing and Parole Review Task Force.

I, along with two distinguished retirees from Connecticut's criminal justice system, Appellate Court Judge Thomas West and prosecutor Mary Galvin, have been asked by Governor Rell to co-chair this new Task Force. Our purpose is to perform a top-to-bottom assessment of all procedures and processes involved in the charging, sentencing and releasing of those convicted of crimes in Connecticut. In addition, we will perform a full-scale review of key steps in the justice system to identify individuals who may be at risk for committing more serious crimes.

Several high-ranking officials will join us on the Task Force:

Commissioner Danaher, Department of Public Safety
Commissioner Lantz, Department of Corrections
Kevin Kane, Chief State's Attorney
Susan Storey, Chief Public Defender
Bob Farr, Parole Board Chairman
The Hon. Barbara Quinn, Judicial Branch
Thomas Flaherty, Executive Director, POST
William Carbone, Court Support Services
Gregory Halzack, Adult Probation
Linda Cimino, Director, Office of Victim Services
Brian Austin, Office of Policy and Management
Greg Butler, Public Member
And some additional members TBA

Our first meeting is scheduled tomorrow from 9:00 – 1:00 here at the Legislative Office Building. One focus for our work will be the transfer of information between all elements of the judicial system chronologically from arrest to release. In addition, we will concentrate on the key elements of critical decision-making along this continuum. To gain access to this knowledge, we will ask experts from each of the stake holding groups to describe their internal processes and how they give and receive information. We will ask the basis for their decision making and I suspect we will see limitations where necessary linkages are missed between the different elements of the system. Our colleagues will be asked to suggest ways in which the system can be improved, recognizing that some improvements can be made immediately and others will take more careful planning. The critical mass created by this multidisciplinary task force will undoubtedly lead us toward realistic and sustainable changes.

Just as this Judiciary Committee recommends the creation of new laws or amendments to existing ones; we will similarly make recommendations for improvements in the transfer of information across the entire Criminal Justice System and accountability for decisions that impact not only the system, but crime victims. As we say in the Domestic Violence movement, we have but one purpose: to keep victims safe and hold perpetrators accountable. Likewise, our Task Force will seek remedies that will improve the criminal justice response by holding all serious criminals accountable while protecting all crime victims.

Thank you.