

March 3 , 2008

Judiciary Committee-Public Hearing

Senators& Representatives of the Judiciary Committee;

I am here today to speak in support of HB5722, an Act Concerning Protective Orders. I am very grateful that this important issue has been taken up this session. I hope that I can impress upon this committee the vital importance that the added language to this bill could have to survivors of sexual assault and their families. I have spent countless hours researching and investigating this matter, including federal and comparative state data. I had to, because no one had the answers for me and I couldn't believe that crime victims had such little protection. I couldn't believe that an animal could get a protective order, but I could not.

My testimony today comes with a price. I give up my son's anonymity as a victim of sexual assault. I give up my privacy and open myself up to public view. But more than that- my speaking out could inflame an already intolerable situation and ignite another flurry of activity against me. Three minutes is not enough time to relate the events of the last four years and its full impact of fear, intimidation, harassment and veiled threats. In 2003 my youngest son, who is developmentally disabled, was molested. Just days afterwards, threats were made. I was advised to get a protective order. Much to my surprise, I was told that my son & I did not meet the requirements- the offender had to be a relative or household member. How can it be that it is easier for me to get a restraining order against my boyfriend than against a child molester? How is it I can protect my dog but not my child? It is so important to impart some protection, some sense of security, to survivors of sexual assault. Just as often the offender is an acquaintance or a stranger- not a family member or member of the household. We are no less scared. I would encourage you to ensure that hurdle is dismantled. I would also encourage you to include protection to family members enduring threats. As in my son's case, the person most available to be threatened is the guardian. Eliminate me and you eliminate the threat of him testifying.

The ensuing maze through the criminal justice system continues until today. Supporters of the accused began a crusade against me. Malicious statements, derogatory and inflammatory stories and personal vilification have ensued. They have posted police reports and court documents including our names and address- an open invitation for any third party to retaliate against me, harass or stalk me, or take advantage of my son. He has not been allowed in our yard alone for 2 ½ yrs since he survived an abduction attempt. I have endured strangers watching my house, strange cars parked at my house and the unending internet chatter.

A failure to provide this protection to our most vulnerable members of society is truly an injustice. I encourage you to rectify this oversight, and pass this bill.

Respectfully,



Alison Wickson Sylvia

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