



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

Nancy Kushins, Executive Director
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing, March 3, 2008

SUPPORT: HB 5722 AN ACT CONCERNING PROTECTIVE ORDERS AND COURT SERVICES FOR CRIME VICTIMS.

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the Judiciary Committee, on behalf of CONNSACS and our nine member programs I want to submit testimony in favor of HB 5722. CONNSACS is the statewide association of nine community-based rape crisis centers in Connecticut. Our mission is to end sexual violence and ensure high quality, comprehensive and culturally competent sexual assault victim services.

During fiscal year 2006-2007 CONNSACS' community-based program staff and volunteers provided services to 4,326 sexual assault victims and their families. Our member centers also provided risk reduction and prevention education to nearly 34,000 children and youth and to over 5,000 members of the general public and training for close to 2,500 professionals, including law enforcement personnel.

CONNSACS is in full support of HB 5722 which addresses a gap in access to protective orders for sexual assault victims and would assess and create programs to ensure the fair and respectful treatment of crime victims in the courts.

Victims who have the courage to come forward and participate in the criminal justice system deserve the full benefit of a protective order and access to a victim advocate to support them.

Under the current system sexual assault victims who do did not have a relationship with the offender, are not permitted to obtain a protective order.

While a sexual assault victim may be able to obtain a *no contact order* through the court, these orders are not filed with the registry. As a result, if there is a

violation of the order, the police have no way to verify it, and the victim must wait until the next available court date to address the violation.

Victims are often afraid of their offender, and fear being harassed or assaulted again. Waiting for a hearing following a violation of a no contact order is frustrating at least and terrifying at worst. Hearings may take several days to schedule because the offender and his or her attorney must be present and the date must be approved by the court. Often times the offender is merely admonished by the court and released again, leaving the victim vulnerable.

The consequences for the offender who violates a protective order are stronger than a no contact order. With a protective order the offender can be charged, the order is filed with the registry, and the police are on notice. The offender faces additional charges if he or she violates the protective order.

As proposed, the protective order will follow an arrest and therefore there is a foundation of probable cause for the request.

We urge you to support HB 5722.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you would like additional information about our position or services.

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