



To: Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Jessica Lewis Branson, Executive Director

Date: March 3, 2008

Re: HB 5722: An Act Concerning Protective Orders and Court Services for
Crime Victims

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Jessica Lewis Branson and I am the Executive Director of the Prudence Crandall Center. I am here today to ask you to insure that House Bill 5722 includes funding for the Family Violence Victim Advocates in the New Britain, New London and Norwalk courts.

In the New Britain area, we have worked extremely hard to create a coordinated community response to domestic violence. The Prudence Crandall Center is in the middle of a capital campaign designed to create a facility that will offer women several housing options and the flexibility to work with individuals whatever their needs. Not all victims of domestic violence need shelter, transitional living or supportive housing, but for those who do our expansion is critical.

In addition to our emergency shelter, counseling, advocacy and support services, we have an advocate stationed in several police departments who can work with a victim at the time of police intervention. This advocate can immediately explain what options are available to insure that a victim and her children remain safe.

The one area that is lacking for victims is in the docket court. The New Britain criminal court has been identified as a docket court but the funding has not been made available to hire a docket victim advocate. A victim advocate who is involved with the docket will work closely with victims to relay their concerns to the court, develop safety plans and uphold a victim's right to obtain information about the progress of the case.

Having a docket advocate in the court can only work to enhance the response to domestic violence that has already been created for residents of New Britain and the surrounding communities.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.