



Working toward ending domestic violence

House Speaker Amman and Representative Mike Lawler;
Co-chairs, Judicial Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06104

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Penni Micca; Interval House Advocate
Domestic Violence Outreach Team (DVOT)
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Testimony: Raised HB 5836
An Act Concerning Staffing at Domestic Violence Shelters

Speaker Amman, Representative Lawlor and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Penni Micca. I am an advocate with Interval House, a domestic violence program serving Hartford and twenty-three surrounding communities.

We are one of three, out of the 18 domestic violence programs in CT that offer twenty-four hour onsite staffing. One of three in the entire state - that's an amazing fact in and of itself.

Three years ago you granted our combined (18) programs \$500,000 for 24/7 onsite coverage. Plain and simple - it was not enough. We are grateful for the increased funds, but try as we may - it does not stretch far enough to cover our needs - the needs of victims of domestic violence and the children they are trying to protect. Interval House took our portion of the increased funding and applied it to the overnight coverage that was already in place. Please don't think this was extra money - or bonus money. We rob Peter to pay Paul. At times we take a person off of a daytime shift to work the overnight shift. Other positions go unfilled. While all three shifts are covered, residents get short changed and don't get the one on one attention they need and deserve.

The needs of the families we serve grow more and more complex... custody, immigration, child protective services, housing, stalking, new dangers resulting from the availability of new technology. Each of these takes time and patience to address. Each and every unfilled position or shift is accompanied by an unfilled or under filled need. Truly it's like treading water.

The statistics you receive from CT Public Safety and the Bureau of Justice Statistics Report don't even begin to reflect the number of domestic violence assaults that occur in each and every one of our communities. Those statistics are built on crimes reported and crimes charged. These do not reflect the work we do at Interval House nor the other seventeen programs in CT. Our programs do not require that a police report be made. Many of the families we serve through shelter, our support groups, one on one counseling, and civil court advocacy won't ever become a "statistic" in the UCR database, or other crime reporting systems.

Our reality is that domestic violence is not fading away. Last year Interval House's on site hotline staff (three to four individuals on any given day) fielded more than two thousand hotline calls and more than sixteen hundred units of phone counseling. They logged more than a thousand units of in-person counseling to community and resident clients. In that same time period, they provided support, advocacy, legal advocacy, information and referrals, transportation, and safety planning while supervising and maintaining the shelter that house more than three hundred women and children. You can't get much leaner than that!

We are attempting to hold on, but truth be told - we are losing our grip. It's just too much. Please... PLEASE... provide us with the funds necessary to help keep victims of domestic violence safe.

Respectfully submitted,

Penni Micca (handwritten signature)

Penni Micca