

Testimony submitted by Louis Tallarita of Enfield, CT 06082

Before the Judiciary Committee March 10, 2008

Re: House Bill 5836 An Act Concerning Staffing At Domestic Violence Shelters

Good afternoon Co-Chair McDonald, Co-Chair Lawlor, and distinguished members of the judiciary committee, my name is Louis Tallarita and I am present in order to testify in favor of House Bill 5836: An Act Concerning Staffing At Domestic Violence Shelters.

As you may imagine, domestic violence does not follow a regular schedule and episodes of domestic violence are unpredictable and often arbitrary. When a victim of abuse takes the initiative to abandon the abuser, they are jeopardizing their safety and in a situation where the risk is potent and tangible. Abusers are often resilient and relentless in efforts to keep their sadistic and deplorable habits secret; victims who flee their abuser deserve convenient and immediate access to a safe haven from their persecutors. Imagine a woman, frantic, ambivalent, alone, and most importantly, frightened; this woman being denied access to proper counsel from the *moment* she arrives at a facility is inexcusable. Most victims of abuse are submissive and self deprecating; if a counselor is not available to console their feelings of uncertainty and distress, the facility is risking the opportunity to intervene. A victim can easily lose the tremendous resolve that it takes to abandon everything in order to escape their antagonist; without properly trained staff on hand to soothe the many concerns of this victim, we are risking both his/her safe recovery and a potential faith in the system's effectiveness.

Domestic violence does not rest; it thrives off of fear, uncertainty, and, most importantly, control. Abusers exert tremendous power over their victims; the ability for the victim to overcome this power through the determination of their own will is often transient. In order to curtail this power, diligent effort of a trained professional is absolutely necessary from the second that the victim enters an emergency shelter. To deny this valuable intervention to the poor, undeserving victims of domestic violence violates the principal responsibility of our government: creating a safe and beneficial society for its citizens.