

Testimony of Jessica L. Rosenbeck

In support of HB 5875, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIMS IN FAMILY RELATIONS MATTERS.

Judiciary Committees Public Hearing

Monday, March 10, 2008

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jessica Rosenbeck, and I am here in support of HB 5875. I support this bill because I strongly feel that it could prevent situations like the one my family found itself in several months ago. On April 14, 2007, my mother, brother, sister, and I left our home in Terryville, CT, in the middle of the night. We had been prisoners in our own home, and had lived in fear for far too long, and had finally found the courage to leave. My mother knew the risks of leaving and feared only the unknown, and had faith that the justice system would be able to help us. For a week and a half, we stayed in a motel terrified that my stepfather Scott would find us.

With the help of amazing friends we stayed safe, and contacted Connecticut domestic violence agencies that we thought could help us. Sadly, we were wrong. The agencies we talked to told us they couldn't help us for one mundane reason after another. First, it was that I was an adult child, then it was because my brother was a teenage boy, and eventually they wanted to separate all of us. But my mother would not let that happen; we were a unit, and it had to stay that way. Finally, the agency asked us if we would consider leaving the state, because we hadn't known this was an option. My mother was very wary of doing this, as she did not want to be accused of kidnapping my siblings. The agency assured her that it was okay, and even put her in touch with a family lawyer, who said the same thing.

We decided to go to California, because we had family there, and it was as far away as we could get from Scott. Also, California had one of the only shelters in the country that would take us as a family. We used almost all of the money we had to buy train tickets for a four-day trip to California. During all of this my mom was terrified of what was ahead, because she knew her opponent was a dangerous one. Upon arriving at the first shelter, we began to follow all the steps we were told were necessary to press charges and deal with all we'd been through. Though my mom spent hours up at night, and hours at various courts and agencies, she hit one roadblock after another. I can't tell you how many times I saw her cry out of fear and frustration. All she ever wanted was her life back and a positive future for her kids.

Months later, try as she might, the only choice was clear: we had to come back to Connecticut. Scott had somehow gotten custody of my siblings, and my mom had to try to fight him in court. She considered just running away with us, but she always tried to do the right thing. We returned, living out of the car, and staying with friends. My mom even got a job, and once again started filing police reports, only to have those reports sit on desks while officers went on vacation. We went to lawyers, court hearings, did everything we were told, but it wasn't enough. No one took us seriously, and my mother paid the price.

On August 23, 2007, my mom and siblings went to our house in Terryville to get some belongings. At that time, Scott had been ordered by the court to be out of the house *twice*, and supposedly he had finally obeyed. But at around 11 pm, Scott came from the in law apartment downstairs with a gun. He forced my mom outside of the house and killed her in the front yard. My siblings were both there. Since that night, our lives have been turned upside down. We have found ourselves without our mother, and it hurts so much to know that she died trying to do the right thing. No other family should know the pain we feel each day, and I hope that with the passing of a bill like this, that can be possible.

Thank you,
Jessica Rosenbeck