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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

Monday, March 10th, 2008
Testimony by House Speaker James Amann
Before the Judiciary Committee
in SUPPORT of

House Bill No. 5836 AAC Staffing at Domestic Violence Shelters

“We know domestic violence perpetrators do not abide by a 9-5 schedule. Victims must have somewhere to turn after regular business hours and on weekends. These times are when many domestic violence crimes are committed.”

While Connecticut is so focused on public safety, we must seize on the opportunity to continue the campaign to eradicate domestic violence. One of the most important responsibilities of government is to lend a helping hand to our most vulnerable citizens. If a victim has nowhere to turn in a traumatic time of need, then shame on us.

In 2007, we made progress on important fronts:

- We expanded circumstances where restraining orders may be sought by law enforcement; and
- We set tougher release conditions for those arrested in domestic violence cases.

However, we are back this year because we fell short of our goal to fund frontline domestic violence services on a 24-hour/7-day-a-week basis. Many shelters still lack adequate staff resources on evenings and weekends, times when help is often needed

most. This means we have more work to do and more people to convince. The numbers are a good place to start this effort.

Over the past fiscal year, Connecticut's 18 domestic violence shelter programs served over 53,000 victims, including shelter services for 1,926 women and their children. In addition to emergency shelter, domestic violence programs include support such as a 24-hour hotline, social and legal services, safety planning, transportation and public education.

Currently, domestic violence shelters receive about \$3.8 million in combined state (\$2.4M) and federal funds (\$1.4M). **The annual estimated cost for ensuring 24-hour staffing at the shelters is an additional \$2.25 million.**

We know domestic violence perpetrators do not abide by a 9-5 schedule. Victims must have somewhere to turn after regular business hours and on weekends. These times are when many domestic violence crimes are committed. Resources should be targeted accordingly.

Victims deserve more than our sympathy. We owe them a system that is caring, responsive, funded – and available 24/7. I look forward to working with advocates and supporters here in the Legislature – and redoubling our efforts to ensure services for all victims, under all circumstances.