

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Susan Delaney from Stamford, Connecticut speaking on behalf of PeaceWorks, the prevention education component of the Domestic Violence Crisis Center serving Stamford, Norwalk, Darien, New Canaan, Weston, Wilton, and Westport. I am here today to speak about Bill No. 6494. The current wording of this bill does not include the participation and expertise of domestic violence providers already providing this education. That is why the substitution of the language that CCADV has submitted is imperative.

As reported by the Centers for Disease Control, one in four adolescents report verbal, physical, emotional or sexual violence. 72% of eighth and ninth graders reportedly "date." By the time they are in high school, 54% of students report dating violence among their peers. Education for our youth on this issue is critical. This bill is a crucial and important step to keeping our teens safe.

Math teachers are trained in math and history teachers are knowledgeable in history and PeaceWorks educators are the experts in teen dating violence. Working within the continuum of care providing education on non-violent behavior begins in pre-kindergarten with topics such as anger management and conflict resolution, and continues through middle and high school with bullying, cyber bullying and the complicated aspects of teen dating violence. Currently within our seven towns, during this academic year, we will provide 1,324 separate classroom presentations and reach more than 24,016 students. PeaceWorks has developed comprehensive and substantive professional relationships with educators and administrators over the past decade. We work with specifically trained

curriculum specialists who have integrated our core concepts into their curriculum. From the largest to the smallest our communities, the schools have integrated a number of our curricula district wide and are PeaceWorks strongest advocates. As noted by Kim Kus, Curriculum Instructional Leader for the Weston School system, "PeaceWorks goals align with our developmental counseling and health curriculums."

PeaceWorks has a team of five trained professionals with more than thirty years of classroom experience. Currently our curriculum supplements State of Connecticut Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework: Standards 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8. We also work with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century teaching model.

A testament to the strength of PeaceWorks can be measured by the level of student, teacher, administrator and parental engagement in the expansion of PeaceWorks, specifically over the past eighteen months.

In four of our communities, Teen PeaceWorks is led by students who have worked to further inform their schools about the issue of teen dating violence through awareness activities and initiating teen dating violence research with a commitment to keep our students safe and reinforce the PeaceWorks tools.

While violence in our society will never be completely eradicated, we believe that it starts with educating early and providing skills and tools to achieve safer choices in relationships.