



To: Judiciary Committee

From: Erika Tindill, Esq., Executive Director  
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: March 26, 2009

Re: H.B. 6245, H.B.6710, and H.B.1157

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Erika Tindill and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV). I appreciate the opportunity to be heard regarding three bills before you today – House Bill 6245: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Task Force on Domestic Violence in Immigrant Communities, House Bill 6710: An Act Concerning Court Operations, and Senate Bill 1157: An Act Concerning Funding for Legal Services and Judicial Branch Technology.

With respect to **H.B. 6245**, the Coalition supports passage of this bill. In our work with immigrant victims of domestic violence, we know that the obstacles they face in order to overcome abuse are far more complex than their counterparts. Among other things, the complexity of obtaining relief for this group of victims stems from struggling to function in an environment of fear that is complicated by the fact of their status. This is partly due to a lack of supportive networks and impediments to accessing resources, but also to a lack of knowledge about the intricacies of American governmental systems. The U-Visa law enforcement official designation requirement (outlined in Section 1(A)(2)) and notification mandate (in Section 2(g)) are important steps in closing the gaps.

**CCADV supports passage of H.B.6710 with the following additional language added to Section 16(c): “but shall not include any information that will**

**compromise victim safety or reveal a victim's confidential location."** As the voice for victims of domestic violence and the programs who provide them with direct services, we must insist that victim safety be part of the equation.

**Regarding H.B.1157, CCADV supports the funding of legal services Programs.** Using increased court fees to help fund legal services is far more cost-effective to the taxpayers of Connecticut than allowing the offices to downsize further or to close. I hope this Committee and those in positions of power understand that even in a strong economy, legal services programs are grossly underfunded and cannot serve a large majority of people who desperately need their help due to a chronic lack of resources. As the financial crisis deepens, we will see an increased need for legal services as more people become eligible for and seek such services.

The work of CCADV and its members is inextricably linked to the legal representation and advocacy provided by the network of legal aid offices across the state. I know firsthand the importance of having a lawyer counsel and represent a victim of domestic violence and the life-altering impact it can have. For many of the men, women and children CCADV member programs serve, legal services attorneys are the only lawyers who are willing or able to assist them. Without the hard work and dedication of legal services attorneys, paralegals, and support staff, many victims would not have the resources to effectively navigate the numerous legal and social service systems that are hurdles to their safety and self-sufficiency.

Having access to legal aid attorneys and staff who are culturally-competent, bilingual, and effective advocates, is perhaps one of the most important services CCADV provides. We urge you to consider the positive impact and long-lasting

effects that funding for legal services has on Connecticut residents, particularly those who are victims of domestic violence.

Thank you for your time and consideration.