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*TESTIMONY OF  
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 23, 2009*

I appreciate the opportunity to support House Bill 6494, An Act Concerning Teen Dating Violence Education.

This proposal requires school districts to provide instruction concerning teen dating violence -- modeled after the 2007 Lindsay Ann Burke Act in Rhode Island.

This proposal mandates a teaching moment, stopping avoidance or ignorance. The problem, severe and nationwide in scope, has been disregarded or belittled for too long. We must confront it -- in our schools as well as our homes.

Connecticut ranks among the top ten states in the number of teens involved in physically violent dating relationships. In the federal Centers for Disease Control's June 2008 Morbidity and Mortality Report, 13.4% of Connecticut teens said they were involved in a physically violent relationship.

Our schools can take the lead in preventing dating abuse. A number of programs can easily be applied to the existing school year -- some at no charge. These programs are designed to help young people recognize the difference between a caring relationship and an abusive one. The goal is to help both potential victims and potential abusers avoid physically violent relationships.

The Rhode Island model is sound. Indeed, the National Association of Attorneys General approved a resolution last year supporting the new Rhode Island law and urging states to devise and implement teen dating violence education policies.

I urge the committee to take a leadership role in preventing teen dating abuse and favorably consider House Bill 6494.