

NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR



WOMEN LEGISLATORS, INC.

February 23, 2009

Education Committee
Legislative Office Building
Room 3100
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: HB 6494, "An Act Concerning Teen Dating Violence Education"

To Chairman Thomas Gaffey, Chairman Andrew Fleischmann, Ranking Member Sam Caligiuri, Ranking Member Marilyn Giuliano, and other distinguished Members of Joint Committee on Education:

On behalf of the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) and NFWL's National Policy Committees on Crime, Justice, Terrorism & Substance Abuse and Education & Training, I would like to thank you for hearing today HB 6494, a bill addressing teen dating violence education.

This past November elected women from every level of government nationwide gathered at NFWL's Annual Conference to raise awareness about the issue of teen dating violence and solutions to curb the spread of this silent threat.

In a recently released survey, commissioned by Liz Claiborne Inc., the data revealed that one in five teens between the ages of 13 and 14 (20%) say their friends are victims of dating violence and nearly half of all tweens (11- 14 year-olds) in relationships say they know friends who are verbally abused. This survey sparked national recognition that a surprising number of young adolescents are experiencing significant levels of dating violence and abuse.

Subsequently, NFWL's National Policy Committees on Crime, Justice, Terrorism, & Substance Abuse and Education & Training introduced and passed a Resolution on teen dating abuse during the conference. The Resolution specifically encourages women legislators in every state to introduce and adopt legislation that requires each public school district to implement a policy against teen dating violence and abuse, and incorporate information on the issue into health education curricula in middle and/or high schools.

The elected women who serve on these National NFWL Policy Committees are so pleased that their colleagues here in Connecticut, Senator Toni Boucher and Senator Eileen Daily, as well as Representative Lawrence Cafero, Jr. have introduced legislation in support of teen dating abuse education and awareness.

Dating violence is at epidemic proportions, resulting in thousands of preventable deaths. All of our children deserve a chance to grow and prosper and to be empowered with the information they need to make good choices.¹ Elected women across the nation appreciate the attention that your Committee is giving to HB 6494 and this critical issue. Thank you for considering these efforts to protect Connecticut's teens.

Sincerely,

Robin Read
President & CEO, NFWL

Enclosure: NFWL Resolution on Teen Dating Violence Education

THE POWER TO MAKE THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU
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NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR  WOMEN LEGISLATORS, INC.

National Policy Committee on Crime, Justice, Terrorism, & Substance Abuse
National Policy Committee on Education & Training

Joint Resolution In Support of Teen Dating Violence Education

(Passed November 2008)

WHEREAS, Teen dating violence is a pattern of controlling and abusive behavior of one person over another within a romantic relationship including verbal, emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse; and,

WHEREAS, Lack of dating experience allows teens to be more vulnerable to dating violence where they are less likely to recognize the abuse; and,

WHEREAS, Teen dating violence has become a prevalent problem in high schools, junior high schools and middle schools throughout our country, with one in three teens experiencing some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships; and,

WHEREAS, Girls and women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence and of the young murdered each year between the ages of 15 to 19 thirty percent are killed by their boyfriend or husband; and,

WHEREAS, Recent studies have shown that teen dating violence is starting at an early age with 11 to 14 year olds able to identify aspects of teen dating abuse in their social lives; and,

WHEREAS, Early sexual experiences can be a precursor to dating violence and abuse among older teens and can perpetuate a culture of acceptance of this type of behavior; and,

WHEREAS, Abuse and violence in intimate partner relationships not only causes great individual pain, but also breaks down families, communities and society at large; and,

WHEREAS, Education is the best mechanism to stop teen dating violence and is crucial to create a culture of intolerance for teen dating abuse;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, NFWL's National Policy Committees on Crime, Justice, Terrorism, & Substance Abuse and Education & Training encourage every state to adopt legislation that provides that each public school district implement a policy against teen dating violence and abuse and incorporate dating violence education into health education curriculum in middle and high schools.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, These Committees recommend that these school policies include a mission statement emphasizing that dating violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated as well as the establishment of procedures, guidelines and disciplinary actions to respond to incidents taking place at school or on school grounds.