



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

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**Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 26, 2009**

**House Bill 6245, An Act Concerning The Recommendations Of The Task
Force On Domestic Violence In Immigrant Communities**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Judicial Branch in regards to House Bill 6245, *An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Task Force on Domestic Violence in Immigrant Communities*. We appreciate the efforts of the Task Force and its co-chairs, Representatives Gerry Fox and Tom Reynolds, for drawing attention to the plight of immigrant women and children who have been subjected to domestic violence.

The Judicial Branch maintains dedicated domestic violence dockets in eight geographical area (GA) courthouses: Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford, Stamford, New London, New Britain, and Norwalk. Extensive staffing is required for the success of each docket; the "teams" includes a dedicated judge, state's attorney's, public defenders, family relations counselors, court clerks, service providers from other state agencies and non-profit family violence victim advocates. Obviously, this comes at great cost. While the goal of having a specialized domestic violence docket in each GA courthouse is laudable, we respectfully submit that it is simply not feasible in the current economic climate.

We would also respectfully request that subsections (a) and (c) of section 3 be deleted from the bill. In regards to subsection (a), victim advocates employed by the Judicial Branch are not the advocates providing assistance to domestic violence dockets in the GA courts; this work is capably handled by contracted family violence victim

advocates. As for subsection (c), a study of this magnitude can only be accomplished with additional staffing and resources.

The Judicial Branch supports subsection (b) of section 3 which calls for training of all relevant Branch personnel regarding the myriad and complex issues surrounding domestic violence in immigrant communities. We believe that this subject matter can be incorporated into the curricula of our on-going staff training.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important subject.