



Greater Hartford Legal Aid

To: Judiciary Committee
From: Enelsa Diaz and Kara Hart, Greater Hartford Legal Aid *KH*
Date: March 24, 2009
Re: Committee Bill No. 6245, *An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Task Force on Domestic Violence in Immigrant Communities.*

We served as members of the Task Force on Domestic Violence in Immigrant Communities and are writing to support the goals of Committee Bill 6245. We recognize the severe fiscal limitations facing the State of Connecticut and urge the General Assembly to adopt, at minimum, a provision in this Bill that could significantly enhance the safety of battered immigrants at little or no cost to State and local law enforcement agencies.

Specifically we ask the General Assembly to pass Section 1 of Committee Bill 6245, amending General Statutes Section 46b-38b(e)(2) with the following substitute language that clarifies the responsibilities of law enforcement agencies and more directly tracks federal regulations:

(2) On or after January 1, 2010, each law enforcement agency shall designate at least one officer with supervisory duties to expeditiously process requests from a victim of family violence or other crime who is applying for U Nonimmigrant Status for: [A] A certification of helpfulness to be provided on Form I-918, Supplement B, or similar form designated by the United States Department of Homeland Security, confirming that the victim has been helpful, is being helpful, or is likely to be helpful in the investigation or prosecution of the criminal activity; or [B] Any subsequent certification required.

The DVIC Task Force recognized that domestic violence is a notoriously underreported crime within the general population and that immigrant victims are even less likely to seek help from law enforcement.

The United States Congress has also recognized that immigrants are frequently targeted for criminal activity because perpetrators exploit a victim's fear of interacting with police. In response, Congress created the U Visa as part of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000. The U Visa program not only enhances the safety of individuals but ultimately improves public safety by giving law enforcement a tool to investigate criminal activity in insulated communities.

If adopted, Committee Bill 6245 would promote awareness of the U Visa Program, encourage immigrants to report crimes committed against them, and improve public safety in Connecticut.

As for the provisions of the Bill that call for the development of law enforcement training and protocols, and that add responsibilities at the scene of family violence incidents, we believe that these warrant further discussion by the Task Force before amending Connecticut's carefully crafted family violence statutes.

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