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Member Shelter Programs

The Umbrella
Ansonia, CT

The Center for Women & Families
Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center
Danbury, CT

United Services, Inc.
Domestic Violence Programs
Dayville, CT

Network Against Domestic Abuse
Enfield, CT

Greenwich YWCA
Domestic Abuse Service
Greenwich, CT

Interval House
Hartford, CT

Meriden-Wallingford Chrysalis
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

Domestic Violence Services
New Haven, CT

Women's Center of SE CT
New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT

Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

United Services, Inc.
Domestic Violence Programs
Willimantic, CT

To: Appropriations Committee
From: Erika Tindill
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Date: February 11, 2010
Re: Staffing at Domestic Violence Shelters

Good evening, Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Erika Tindill. I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Thank you for accepting my testimony regarding staffing at domestic violence shelters.

For the past several years, CCADV and its members programs have been asking – begging - for funding for supportive services and 24/7 staffing at safe homes and emergency shelters for survivors of domestic violence. As you are aware, this has been an uphill battle and is particularly challenging this year in light of the state's \$515M budget deficit.

We will pay a price for failing to support services for families impacted by domestic violence. The cost will come in the form of increased state spending for healthcare, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), unemployment claims, and the cost of lost productivity to business and industry. The number of Connecticut citizens accessing domestic violence services increases as families struggle in this economy. This will continue to occur whether or not there is a budget deficit. We will have to spend state funds to prosecute and monitor offenders whether or not there is a budget deficit. In FY 2007, CCADV's 18 member programs served 47,471 people. In FY 2009, that number jumped to 56,636 people. That number is projected to be higher in FY 2010 and even higher in FY 2011.

I believe we all agree that the state cannot sustain a multimillion dollar deficit and continue to spend without restraint. We all agree that state government should be efficient and make cost-effective spending decisions. Do we also agree that *every* human being deserves to live a life free of violence and that home should be a safe, nurturing place for families? Connecticut can ill-afford to permit domestic violence services to be underfunded.

In 2005, the state, through the Department of Social Services (DSS), allocated additional funding to CCADV member programs, to the tune of approximately \$27,000 dollars per program (half that to the two programs that do safe home referrals) to assist them in achieving 24/7 staffing. With that additional support, programs were able to provide an additional 300 hours of service per week. A survey of the clients served during that period of increased funding indicated that:

- 88% percent reported learning more about the dynamics of domestic violence and its effect on their lives;
- 89% percent reported learning more about the resources, services and options available to them;
- 87% reported an increased knowledge of safety planning; and
- 92% percent felt they benefited from the services they received.

I point out these numbers to demonstrate the effectiveness of a small amount of additional funding. As you have suggested, our programs have leveraged private funding sources, trained and certified additional volunteers and interns, and have applied for and secured additional federal funds. They have exhausted all other potential sources of funding and so we are back asking that you fully fund 24/7 staffing at domestic violence shelters. We are also asking that you mandate the annual distribution of Marriage License Surcharge fees under C.G. S. §7-73.

Thank you in advance, on behalf of the clients we serve, for your thoughtful consideration of this request.