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*Testimony of Representative Gerald Fox of Stamford
Before the Education Committee on Raised Bill 5315, An Act Concerning Education and the
Reduction of Domestic Violence*

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee, I would like to thank you for raising HB 5315, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION AND THE REDUCTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

The need for better domestic violence victims' support services, and a more effective law enforcement and legal system have grown dramatically in recent years. Already about thirty percent of our criminal court dockets involve domestic violence and many more of these crimes go unreported.

In an effort to help formulate Connecticut's response to challenges faced by victims of domestic violence, the Speaker of the House Chris Donovan convened a bi-partisan task force on domestic violence.

The task force began their work in November 2009 and held a series of meetings at which they heard testimony and suggestions from domestic violence advocacy groups, survivors, police, prosecutors, state court officials, educators, and family support counselors. I had the privilege of participating in the work of the task force and an important component of our legislative recommendations seeks to identify areas that require improvement, particularly in education, protection and prevention services for victims. HB 5315 is based on some of the task force's recommendations.

Dating violence cannot be treated as only an adult problem. In fact, what the task force found was that teen dating violence is disturbingly common. The goal of this legislation is to bring awareness to the problem of domestic violence and teen dating violence. Students need to be aware of the damage that this type of behavior causes and education professionals need to be able to recognize the warning signs so that they can help. Unless the cycle of behavior is stopped, teen abusers will become adult abusers. Our teenagers who are victims of domestic violence need to know that they are not alone. It is clear that by investing in education, we take another step towards reducing the incidents of domestic violence and protecting our young people.

Thank you very much for this opportunity today and I urge the committee's favorable report.