

CCADV

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence
90 Pitkin Street
East Hartford, CT 06108
860 282-7899

To: Judiciary Committee

From: Linda Blozie
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: February 26, 2010

Re: RB 5148: An Act Concerning Funding for the Judicial Branch

Good afternoon, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Linda Blozie and I am the Director of Public Affairs for the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Thank you for accepting my testimony regarding Raised Bill 5148: An Act Concerning Funding for the Judicial Branch.

Since the passage of the Family Violence Prevention and Response Act in 1986, the Judicial Branch has put into place a system to respond to victims of domestic violence. This includes both personnel working in our criminal and civil courts and funding to our eighteen member programs for victim advocacy in these courts. Through the Family Violence Intervention Unit, the Court Support Services Division works diligently to provide for victim safety while insuring offender accountability. Each year, tens of thousands of victims of domestic violence pass through the courts seeking some type of intervention to stop the violence they are experiencing. Last year alone, 39,751 individuals received services from domestic violence advocates who are based in criminal courts.

On behalf of CCADV and its eighteen member programs, I am here this afternoon to ask you to support Raised Bill 5148. As we witnessed this Fall, potential cuts to the "Other Expenses" line item of the Judicial budget would have directly impacted victims of domestic violence. With a proposed cut of 25% to our state funding for the Family Violence Victim Advocate Program, we were panicked for over two months while we waited to see what would happen. As we had already had spent a good portion of our allocation, this cut would have meant that at best, we would have only eight to ten weeks before we had to stop providing services in every court across the state. We estimated that 10,000 victims would not have access to someone who could help them through the process or provide them support and advocacy services.

While the proposed cut of \$270,000 never took effect, I cannot imagine that the Judicial Branch will be able to protect these funds if they are forced to reduce their budget. \$270,000 may not seem like a lot of money but when you are trying to service 40,000 victims, it is everything.

Domestic violence is finally starting to get the attention it so desperately needs. The Speaker has made it a legislative priority this year. I would ask that you follow suit and adequately fund the systems in place that support this work.

Thank you.