



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
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To: Labor and Public Employees Committee

From: Erika Tindill  
Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Date: March 2, 2010

Re: RB 5284: An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Discriminatory Practices

Good afternoon, Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Erika Tindill and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Thank you for accepting my testimony for Raised Bill 5284: An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Discriminatory Practices.

It appears that this proposed legislation resulted from a lawsuit, recently heard in the Superior Court in New London, Gillies vs. Stonington Free Library and Stonington Free Library Association Board of Trustees. As I understand it, Heather Gillies sued the Stonington Free Library for wrongful termination after she had been beaten by her husband and missed some work. In Ms. Gillies' case, it was alleged that library personnel told her that the restraining order she held would have a negative impact on the library and that she should refrain from discussing it with library patrons. It was shortly thereafter that Ms. Gilles was terminated from her position as librarian.

What Ms. Gillies experienced happens to victims throughout this state on a regular basis. Countless victims experience negative employment consequences for behavior that they did not cause and that they cannot fix. If an abuser shows up at the workplace, it is the victims fault. If a victim takes time to seek help, they are charged with excessive absenteeism. Victims need the support of employers, not the fear of unemployment.

Domestic violence can effect one's productivity in the workplace yet for many victims the workplace is a safe haven from the violence they experience in their relationship. The workplace is an ideal place for a victim to get help. It is the place where a victim spends the most amount of time without their abuser. It is not a place where a victim needs to be blamed for the actions of their abuser.

CCADV supports the concept of this bill and understands that it is a lofty piece of legislation. We have been working with Speaker Donovan, Representative Mae Flexor and members of the Speaker's Domestic Violence Task Force to identify specific employment protections that are of great importance to victims and survivors. To offer those protections, CCADV is suggesting that Connecticut General Statute § 54-85b be amended to include for paid or unpaid leave so that any victim of family violence can (1) seek medical, psychological or other counseling services; (2) obtain services from a victim services organization; (3) relocate due to such violence; and (4) to participate in any civil and/or criminal proceedings related to the violence. This proposed amendment will be introduced through the Judiciary Committee as "additional employment protections for crime victims."

I thank you for any positive consideration you give any language that further protects victims in the workplace and I am willing to answer any questions that you may have.