



## State of Connecticut

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER  
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**Testimony of Speaker of the House Christopher G. Donovan  
To the Education Committee in support of  
House Bill 5315, *AAC Education and the Reduction of Domestic Violence*  
March 1, 2010**

Good afternoon Representative Fleischmann, Senator Gaffey, and members of the Education Committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my strong support for **House Bill 5315, *AAC Education and the Reduction of Domestic Violence***, a proposal which will empower educators to better identify and respond to teen dating violence and promote awareness and prevention of domestic violence. This bill is based on one of the recommendations of the bipartisan, bicameral Speaker's Task Force on Domestic Violence, which has heard from advocates, students and educators about the need for more training for school faculty and staff.

This legislation adds teen dating and domestic violence to the list of topics covered by in-service training programs for teachers and administrators, with the support of the State Board of Education. It also permits school districts to include paraprofessionals and noncertified employees, who work one on one with students throughout the school day, to participate in these sessions. The State Department of Education has already developed educational materials on healthy relationships, which will be made available to districts and educators for training purposes.

According to the results of the 2007 Connecticut School Health Survey, 13.4% of students reported being hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by a significant other during the preceding 12 months. This is compared with 9.9% of students nationwide who reported intentional injury by a boyfriend or girlfriend. Dating violence has long term physical, academic, social and emotional consequences for those who experience it. If these behaviors are not identified and addressed at an early age, they can persist into adulthood and carry serious consequences.

Because Connecticut does not have a state graduation credit requirement in comprehensive health education, many students do not have regular access to educators specifically trained in addressing teen dating and domestic violence. Even though they spend many hours working closely with students throughout the school year, training for other teachers and non-certified staff in identifying and responding to dating and domestic violence is difficult to come by.

Recognizing the many demands placed on educators and school districts in this time of limited resources, this bill moves us in the right direction by improving educators' access to training on these important topics. With the support of the Department of Education, its existing materials, and curriculum framework, districts will be better able to train faculty and intervene in situations where students are at risk.

I would like to commend both the Education Committee and the Task Force on Domestic Violence for their work to prevent and address teen dating and domestic violence. I urge your support for this important proposal.