

Good Morning Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, Senator Doyle and Representative Walker, members of the Judiciary Committee and Human Services. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning the issue of Domestic Violence.

I am a victim of Domestic Violence.

For years, my husband hit me, kicked me, and abused me physically, emotionally, mentally. He said he would leave me dead. I took whatever he handed out as long as he never touched my children. But of course, it wasn't enough for him to just hurt me. One night in October 2007, he assaulted my oldest daughter because she had decided that she would defend her mother. He hit her and kicked her. My youngest daughter begged him to stop. I couldn't get him off of us. My son intervened and the assault stopped. The police came out and my husband was arrested. This would be the first of many arrests...and not with just me.

In my case, my husband assaulted his sister, his step-daughter, myself and 2 other women. He was arrested for assaulting his sister in 2004. He was arrested 5 times with me alone between October 07 and April 08 for violations at either at my home or my place of employment – **4 times in one month**. He was also arrested in a courthouse in April of 08 and again in May of 09. He was arrested with 1 girlfriend twice in 2008. And with the 2<sup>nd</sup> girlfriend the police were called as well. He had a temporary protective order with his sister. He had multiple protective orders with me and my children. He also had protective or restraining orders with at least one of the other women. Ultimately, I was given a Standing Criminal Restraining Order which never expires, although only my oldest daughter is on it. The criminal court offered no permanent protection for my youngest child stating that he **“hadn't hit her yet”**. I actually had to go to another court to obtain a restraining order to protect her. He took anger management with the first arrest in 04. He was first given family violence classes with the October 07 arrest. These were withdrawn because of violations of the protective orders. Ultimately States Attorney Kevin Dunn got involved and my husband was enrolled in the Evolve Program. While in the Evolve Program, he was actively violating the protective orders and was arrested for threatening the other woman and violating conditions of release. Each time he was told not to do it again, to abide by the protective order, continue with his classes and have no contact. Each time, he repeated the offense. The order stated 100 yards and he would sit at 100 yards and 13 feet and watch my house. He would sit in the lot near where I work and watch my job. He said he would leave me dead in my front lawn and ultimately that's where he finally cornered me...and my 11 year old

daughter! We didn't sleep. We were afraid. I did not want to die. The Ansonia Police were amazing. They always responded quickly. They understood the protective order. They did everything in their power to keep us safe. The Office of the Victims advocate fought hard to protect us and Umbrella gave us counseling and let us know that we could break the cycle.

Ultimately my husband served one 90 day sentence and one 6 month sentence for violating the Standing Criminal Order with me and violating the conditions of release with on of the other women – **a total of 9 months for more than 8 arrests involving 3 women and 3 children!**

There is something wrong with a system that allows this. We need change and we need it quickly.

When there is a domestic violence arrest, the offender is brought before the judge the next day. The police need to keep that person in custody until their arraignment.

We need to have courts that specialize in Domestic Violence Crimes and judges that are consistently on the bench. Judges need to be educated on the patterns of abuse. They need to act quickly and know they have the power and the duty to protect those who can't protect themselves. They need to understand that just because the order states "no contact", it does not necessitate physical contact.

Judges need to be aware of all of the history involving that offender right from the first hearing. The courts, probation departments and program administrators need to communicate with each other.

Protective orders must be given and enforced. Any violations should not be tolerated.

If classes are given once, and the offender violates, they should not be allowed to take those classes again.

Judges need to follow through with punishments and hold the abusers accountable for **any** violation. After all, it is not only a violation of a protective or restraining order; it is a violation of a court order...*a judge's court order.*

The reality is that Domestic Violence is an epidemic.

Every day someone is being abused.

It is our responsibility to do everything in our power to stop the cycle... to hold the abusers accountable...to empower those who feel powerless.

Protective orders are just pieces of paper...they can't block a punch...they aren't bulletproof.

But protective orders backed by police that enforce them, strong laws, consistent judges and tougher penalties will help save lives.

Thank You.

Submitted on 3-15-10 by:

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