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 Prudence Crandall Center, Inc.

To: Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Barbara Damon, Executive Director

Date: March 15, 2010

Re: Raised Bill 5497: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Speaker of the House of Representatives' Task Force on Domestic Violence

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Senator Doyle, Representative Lawlor, Representative Walker and members of the Human Services and Judiciary Committee. My name is Barbara Damon and I am the Executive Director of the Prudence Crandall Center. I am here today to ask you to insure that Raised Bill 5497 includes funding for Docket Court Family Violence Victim Advocates in each GA court in Connecticut.

In the New Britain area, we have worked extremely hard to create a coordinated community response to domestic violence. The Prudence Crandall Center recently opened a new facility that offers victims several housing options and the flexibility to work with individuals to meet their complex needs. Not all victims of domestic violence need shelter, transitional living or supportive housing, but for those who do this expansion is critical.

In addition to our emergency shelter, counseling, advocacy and support services, we have an advocate stationed at the New Britain Police Department who can work with a victim at the time of police intervention. This advocate can immediately explain what options are available to insure that the victim and her children remain safe.

Although we have recently secured funding through the Recovery Act for a docket victim advocate in the New Britain criminal court, the funding is only for one year. The New Britain criminal court has been identified as a docket court and for several years funding was not available to hire a docket victim advocate. There is no other funding source identified to replace these dollars and continue this work. Currently, the victim advocate we have that is involved with the docket works closely with victims to relay their concerns to the court, develop safety plans and uphold a victim's right to obtain information about the progress of the case.

A docket advocate in the court works to enhance our coordinated response to domestic violence for residents of New Britain and the surrounding communities. Please consider funding these docket courts. I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.