

**Testimony of Kathi Rich to the Human Services Committee in support of:  
HB 6053, AAC Domestic Violence and Child Trauma  
March 22, 2011**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on **HB 6053, AAC Domestic Violence and Child Trauma**. My terror began in Jan. 1997. I met a man who could charm a cobra. Like an idiot I fell for him. My 20 year marriage had just failed and I had two teenage sons. Within a month I was pregnant, and the beatings began. I can remember every detail of every beating to this day. The very first beating was because I found out he was driving my car without a driver's license and was still seeing his old girlfriend. He found me talking on my phone quietly in the closet. He ripped me from the closet and punched me in the head before I was thrown across the room. My sons and their friends were in shock. He made all of us sit in the living room quietly. Every few minutes he would find an excuse to punch me in the head again. I made my escape when he took off in my car. I ran to my next door neighbor's house and called 911. He must have seen me run because he came after me, by then the police showed up. He was ultimately charged with breach of peace. I was shaken to the core, never having been physically harmed by anybody prior to that. He was allowed to call me from lock up and ask me to bail him out. I refused. Around midnight he was knocking at my door. I swore I'd never let him in again. He left with his ex-girlfriend. The next morning he walked in to the house I owned with my ex husband and announced he was here to stay. If I had known this was to continue for so long I might have taken my own life to spare my sons. I was beaten over 25 times in 6 yrs. I am scarred and broken. I am losing my sight to nerve damage caused by multiple and repeated blows to the head. I am insulin dependent due to blows to the abdomen causing scar tissue of my pancreas. After 3 years of treating the diabetes I am still now under control. Over the years I lost teeth, friends, and any respect I might have had for myself. I was even raped 3 times. The first time he raped me I was on the phone long distance with my sister and I dropped the phone, my poor sister had to listen to the sounds of me being raped. I did not think I wanted to survive that either. I never told the police, only my advocate. I was humiliated, I felt dirty, I remember each time this happened standing under a hot shower for what felt like forever, I felt so dirty. Any time he was sent to prison, he always got sentenced to one year. He would immediately find me upon release and the terror would start over. I gave birth to my youngest son 1 year into this mess. He was the love of our (my sons and myself) lives. The only time he saw any of this was the final beating before he earned an 8 yr sentence. I am scared to death of him. He has beaten my head into the pavement so hard it dislodged an earring and ground it into my skull. The last beating was by far the worse. My then 5 yr old and I saw him walking up our street so we barricaded ourselves and our German shepherd in the room with a dresser, thinking we were safe. Jesse (my 5 yr old ) was clinging to my leg as his father came flying through a locked window. The first blow to the head knocked me out cold. As I came to, Jesse still clinging to my leg, I was being raped and Jesse was screaming. My attacker threw my baby across the room and beat my dog. He then broke my baby's Walt Disney 50th anniversary snow globe right in front of him to let him know who was boss. I was then dragged down the hallway by hair, followed by Jesse. My attacker ran from the house with my baby in his arms screaming. He had just handed Jesse to me as an off duty police man drove up. Jesse and I ran back to the house hysterical. While in custody at HCC my attacker was charged with over 250 violation of a protective order and over 250 counts of harassment. He is due out this August after 8 yrs of rebuilding our lives. My sons are all happy, healthy and all in good schools. I struggle to live with PTSD, I rarely sleep nights, and it is getting worse as this summer comes quicker and quicker. PLEASE help me and my son. I am scared to death, I want to live to raise my son, he is only 13. Stop plea bargaining with repeat domestic abusers. Don't punish the victim by taking her child away. Something has to be done. Please do something so I can live long enough to see my boys with happy adult lives. Thank you for the chance to speak. I'm sorry I could not be there in person, I have crippling panic attacks from all of this.

The over 250 counts of violation of a protective order were plea bargained down to 1 count! Blew me away. And in the summer of 2009 when my youngest son was at an age to change schools and was real apprehensive, I moved him from public to a catholic school to give him the very best I can. The public defender sent her investigator, out snooping to try and find me. There is a bench order forbidding him from looking for us and the Public Defender herself broke this rule, thus endangering our lives. She went to my last known address which is now occupied by my ex husband and his new wife. The investigator told the new wife that if she did not tell her where I was that she would be arrested on site. So out of fear she gave my address. My ex husband and his wife and I remain good friends, so it got right to me. We fought it and got nowhere.

Thank you so much for all you are doing.