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Testimony in favor of SB-1035 and HB-6425

Eleven months ago I retired from the Hartford Police department after 23 years of exemplary service to the citizens of the city of Hartford and the state of Connecticut. In my two decades with law enforcement I saw the full extent of what human beings are capable of doing to each other.

I made arrests for homicide, sexual assault, and severe domestic violence among other things. I saw children who were sexually abused and a father who stabbed his own child.

As you sit here today listening to arguments about whether to keep the death penalty in our state, I can offer some observations I have after 23 years on the job.

In all the violence I saw, in all the arrests that I participated in and observed, I can be sure of one thing. Not one of the persons I saw who caused enormous harm to another human being thought about the consequences of his actions at the time. As a taxpayer I'm not concerned how many professors pour over crime statistics in states with and without the death penalty and come up with theories supporting or refuting deterrence. I can assure you that someone who is ready to kill is not thinking about the death penalty. To me it is really futile to believe otherwise.

Another thing I observed is that victims of violence in our state are not getting what they need. I saw sexual abuse victims who were children turn 16 and not be entitled to services available for children. I saw women and children involved in abusive domestic situations with no resources in the community to escape the violence.

If we want to prevent violence we have to help the victims of violence. Many victims of violent crime grow up to be perpetrators of violent crime. We don't need studies to understand this one either. If we treat victims of violence with the needs they have they will be less likely to be involved in future violent situations.

This of course brings me to the question of resources. In these times we face the harsh reality that putting resources towards one program takes away resources from others. That is the hard truth. In the last couple of years I saw police resources reduced and I can tell you it affects the safety of the officers and the people we are trying to protect.

We no longer are offered necessary extensive training on how work in a domestic violence situation. These are the most volatile for sure and yet with cutbacks the department can only provide police training on how to deal with domestic violence that is

mandated by the state. That is not enough. Officers who are not well trained are open to attack and have a harder time protecting others from violence.

So I have come to the conclusion that the death penalty is not the solution. If I had to choose between the death penalty and necessary training for officers or victims services, it is clear to me that the latter saves more lives than the former.