



**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**  
Serving the communities of  
Stamford, Norwalk, Westport,  
New Canaan, Darien, Wilton  
and Weston

Written Testimony Submitted to the Judiciary Committee by Katie Pawlik & Andrea Dahms

Date: March 30, 2011

Re: **Raised Bill No. 1220, Section 4 (Revenue received as a result of any criminal penalty in a Family Violence Crime)**

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The DVCC strongly supports the Judiciary Committee's stated intent to allocate criminal fines in family violence cases to programs that benefit victims of family violence when drafting Section 4 of Raised Bill No. 1220. Unfortunately, the way the statute is constructed currently it will serve to benefit perpetrators of family violence, and it is unclear how it will benefit victims of domestic violence. The DVCC believes that the language should be clarified as to exactly how these funds will benefit victims of domestic violence. As it is constructed now, the section states that "revenue received as a result of any criminal penalty assessed in a family violence crime" will be assessed and allocated quarterly to "the pretrial family violence education program" or "any other program provided by the Judicial Department for the benefit of victims of family violence." This memorandum will discuss each category of possible recipient of funds in turn, but both appear to be problematic given that the stated purpose of the statute is to "allocate fines...to benefit victims of family violence."

First, by directing the funds to the "pretrial family violence education program", the statute has gone way off-course from its stated purpose. Essentially, this is like returning the funds right back to the abuser. Pretrial programs were created for the benefit of the accused abuser, and provide him or her with a chance to show their willingness for reform, often times availing themselves of an option to leave court without a criminal record. The defendant is required pay for the classes that he or she attends, and many experts believe this payment for services is a crucial psychological component of "buy-in" from the abuser, in other words, feeling invested in the process. If the legislature intends to direct that money to "programs that benefit victims of family violence", this category of recipient should be removed from the Bill.

Turning to the second category, "any other program provided by the Judicial Department for the benefit of victims of family violence," if the legislature intends through this category to allocate the funds to local domestic violence service providers, it should rewrite the language to make that clear. As it reads now, it could be interpreted to mean that only programs that are under the purview of the Judicial Department shall be the beneficiary of this money. Local domestic violence providers do contract with the Court Support Services Division, a division of the Judicial Department, to provide victim advocacy in the courts but are not technically a program of the Judicial Department. The DVCC recommends that

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the language be changed to "the local domestic violence service provider as recognized by Connecticut Coalition against Domestic Violence."

As the statement of purpose of the Bill says, the funds should be allocated to the victims' service providers, that is, the local domestic violence agency serving that jurisdiction. Domestic violence agencies provide myriad important services that are essential to victims of domestic violence to enhance safety and provide support in the transition to stability during a period of crisis. Domestic violence agencies around the state offer emergency shelter, counseling, advocacy in the criminal and civil courts, advocacy in the medical setting, educational and community outreach, and transitional housing. A victim seeking these services does so when after being subjected to the abuse so substantial, he or she can take it no more, and victim services agencies are there to support that individual as they begin along a difficult journey. Allocating these funds directly to the local DV providers will be the most direct route for these funds to benefit victims.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of any assistance as you further examine this issue.

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