

Testimony of Susan B. Anthony Project
In Support of HB 6633 An Act Concerning Stalking
Mary DeLucia, Sexual Assault Adult Advocate
Judiciary Committee, March 29, 2011

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Mary DeLucia. I am an advocate for the Susan B. Anthony Project; which is an organization that provides counseling, support, and advocacy to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. We support HB 6633, *An Act Concerning Stalking*.

HB 6633 will bring current Connecticut stalking laws more up to date with current technologies and manipulations abusers use to stalk their victims. Sexual assault and domestic violence are crimes about power and control, and when a survivor is living their lives independently; whether it be by leaving an abusive relationship or just continuing to move on after a sexual assault, they are taking the power back for themselves. Stalking is a tool abusers use to assert power and keep control over their victims. Now with all of our technological advances, it is a lot easier for abusers to stalk their victims. For example, GPS monitors on cell phones and in cars are current ways abusers keep track of the location of their victims no matter where they go to get away.

Another example of a technological advancement that can be used to improve methods of stalking would be that the majority of cell phones have unlimited text messaging plans. I have lost track of the numbers of clients who have come to me and said: "So-and-so keeps blowing up my phone with texts". Stalkers do not need to physically "follow or lie in wait" of their victims anymore when they have their victim's cell phone number and they can text numerous times: "Where are you?", "What are you doing?", "I know you're at work", "I know you're at so-and-so's house", and the list goes on. Not responding to the text messages will just result in even more personal attacks to the victim via text messaging. Cell phones are great portable tools anyone can use to dial emergency numbers no matter where they are, but it is very hard, if at all possible, to ignore your phone ringing or vibrating every time you get a text message.

One more piece of technology abusers use to stalk their victims is the renown *67 number anyone can dial in their phones before the number they are calling to block their caller ids from appearing on the recipient's phone. However, if a victim goes to file a police report for numerous phone calls from an unknown number there are currently no laws in place to help back them up.

Stalking is a tactic used by someone in order to assert power over and to control another person. Connecticut needs a new, updated stalking law to allow for new technological methods that stalkers use to maintain power over their victims. Right now prosecutors need physical evidence that a stalker was physically following or there at a victim's house or place of employment in order to hold the stalker liable. Now there are new ways to "follow" someone through electronic devices, but no laws to help support a victim who wants this new technological stalking to stop.

The first thing I tell a survivor of stalking when they come to me is to document every time this happens. Maybe with this documentation and this updated stalking law we can finally help survivors of stalking feel supported in the courtroom.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
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