

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL No. 5509

Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for letting me testify today. My name is Frank Maturo, and I am a member of CT Alimony Reform. I live in Darien. My divorce took eight years and is now over. I am not in litigation and whether this Bill gets passed or not, I will not benefit from the new law in anyway. However, I am here to say it is time for Alimony Reform to come to the State of CT. No one should have to endure the unpredictable ramifications of today's family law system.

I want to address two benefits in this Bill: 1. to reduce the acrimony and litigation for the benefit of the family, and 2. To make the cohabitation provisions pro-family instead of anti-family, which they are today.

My case is a long and complicated one and I cannot boil it down to three minutes. However, I can tell you that for too many lawyers, I was the big fish. They were going to convince my ex-wife to litigate no matter what was best for my family. And they certainly did. I was married for approximately fifteen years and I was ordered to turn over almost all of the assets that I had earned to her. All I cared about were two things: to be able to have a parenting plan that allowed me a significant amount of time with my twin sons. I had always been very involved in their lives, and expected to remain so. The other was to walk away with a fair division of the assets.

Fortunately, despite their best efforts to limit me, I was happy with the parenting plan. But the financial decision was beyond the pale and one that few had ever seen before. Although I got nearly wiped out, I have been lucky enough to stay employed, and slowly work my way back. The incentive to litigate is too great and causes cases to drag on for years, it depletes family resources, and injures both families, in particular the children. This Bill will go a long way to reduce repeat litigation, and finally reduce huge family court backlog.

It seems that alimony is viewed as punishment even though we are in a no fault state. I was forced to pay alimony even when my ex wife, with an advanced degree and her own business, was cohabiting with another man for almost five years. Today's cohabitation law is anti-family and encourages couples not to marry due to losing alimony benefits. Why would Connecticut, which promotes marriage by passing a same-sex marriage law, so that all can enjoy

the institution of marriage, still follow divorce laws that encourage couples NOT to marry?

While my divorce decree stated alimony ends with re-marriage or cohabitation, proving cohabitation was nearly impossible, and of value only to the lawyers and private investigators that had to be hired. The state's cohabitation law requires that in addition to living together, the live-in boyfriend must also provide financial support to the household. However, in my case, the household needed no support since my ex-wife received approx. 85 percent of the assets, including a substantial house with no mortgage, school tuition payments, and all other children's expenses. She had no need of additional support from anyone.

Like the new Massachusetts law on which it was based, Bill No. 5509 provides generous alimony when necessary to make the transition to independence; allows payers a meaningful right to retire; clarifies in a practical way cohabitation; and removes the income and assets of new spouses in alimony modifications. This Bill is necessary now, it is needed now, and I respectfully ask you to pass it now. Thank you.