

Testimony of Christine Rodrigue
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee

Regarding

R.B. No. 5548: AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

March 23, 2012

Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Christine Rodrigue and I am here today to speak on Raised Bill 5548: An Act Concerning Domestic Violence. It is particularly challenging for me to be here today because talking about my personal experiences always provokes feelings and images that I want to forget. But if even one word that I say today helps to protect other victims, then it is worth the time I spend with you.

My ex-husband was an alcoholic and it took me months of living in denial before I would come to that realization. I thought, how could I have not seen it. I'm smarter than that. He was drunk or under the influence of drugs throughout our relationship. The first time I was abused was shortly after I got married. Most of the abuse I experienced was verbal abuse or so I thought-he would negatively comment on my cooking abilities, he would humiliate me in public and belittle my children. He also sexually assaulted me but I never once considered his inappropriate advances to be abusive. I was taught that pleasing my husband sexually was my duty as his wife. When I refused he would accuse me of cheating on him and whenever the phone rang and someone hung up, he was convinced it was a man calling for me. As the years past, he continued to verbally and sexually assault me and on occasions his abuse turned physical. One day in a drunken fit, he told me that he attempted to kill himself. I saw him standing over our son in the strangest of ways, so I called the police because I didn't know what he would do.

Before the police arrived he had trashed the kitchen, there were broken windows. He also strangled me. I was determined I was not going to die nor was he going to harm or raise our son! With all the power I could muster I managed to reach my arms to his body and shove him into the kitchen counter. I caught him off guard and he released his hands from my throat. When the police arrived he was taken to the hospital and I was told that if I disclosed that I was strangled then DCF would be called and my children would be taken away. I couldn't risk losing my children so I remained silent. He was never arrested.

I endured the abuse for 14 years and it wasn't until my ex-husband jacked my son up against the wall in a strangle hold that I left. I was determined that no one would ever abuse my children. I went to the court and with the assistance of the people there I was able to file for divorce on my own. I tried to request a restraining order but I was told that since my history of abuse was verbal in nature, I was not eligible. I never mentioned the strangulation for fear of losing my children and I never spoke of the sexual abuse because I didn't realize it was abuse.

Today I would qualify for a restraining order that would be good for six months then I could appeal to the court for a longer period of time. I could through the initial process but I don't know if I would return for an extension. I don't think I could bear to face my abuser again and go through the process. I want the violence to stop, I don't want additional opportunities for him to engage or have contact with me. **I am asking you to extend the length of time of restraining for up to one year.** Today, I have healed and I work to raise awareness about domestic violence. I have my own cable show and I bring in guests from domestic violence organizations to talk about what services are available. Today, you too have a chance to make a difference in the lives of victims by supporting Bill Number 5548. Thank you for your time.