

**TESTIMONY OF PENNI MICCA
SUBMITTED TO HUMAN SERVICES
COMMITTEE
Friday, March 23, 2012**

**Raised Bill No. 5548
AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE**

Good afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Penni Micca. As a representative of Interval House, Connecticut's largest domestic violence intervention and prevention program, a member of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) Public Policy Committee, and Chair of the Connecticut Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee (CDVFR), I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony pertaining to Raised Bill No. 5548: An Act Concerning Domestic Violence. I also had the privilege of being appointed by the Governor to sit on the Task Force on Law Enforcement Response to Family Violence that was created and defined by this very act in 2011.

Last year, An Act Pertaining to Domestic Violence was amended to extend restitution services – compensation - to victims of domestic violence and their families. This change has made a huge impact on the aforementioned individuals and was celebrated by domestic violence service providers. What we learned from our finding on the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee was that in many cases, children were present when the fatality occurred. Can you imagine what a profound impact it would have on a child to witness a parent being murdered, and in some cases, a parent committing suicide? What we weren't prepared for was the fact that in some instances, children that were present when the fatality occurred included children who were *not* related to the family. They might have been having an overnight with a playmate. What happens to them after the police leave? Section 16 Subsection (b) of R.B. 5548 extends OVS restitution services to include children who witness domestic violence, including, but not limited to, children who are not related to the victim. Please support this change and help assure that *all* children who witness domestic violence in our state have equal access to counseling services.

I'd also like to take a moment to talk to you about the Task Force on Law Enforcement Response to Family Violence. We met for three months as a group to come up with a number of recommendations. A Model Family Violence Policy Committee continued to meet on a weekly basis for an additional two months. We put together a model policy based on team recommendations using the CT Police Officer Standards and Training Council (P.O.S.T.) family violence model policy and curriculum as our foundation. It was a great experience. I am proud of the final product and the collaborative decisions made regarding content. There were a lot of stakeholders in the room with a lot of different points of view, but we listened and talked and wrote – and rewrote – and were able to develop policy and procedure to help strengthen and standardized law enforcement response to family violence.

We kept three things in the forefront as we worked through each topic crafting procedures and policies that will (1) enhance the safety of victims of domestic violence, (2) more effectively address the perpetrator of family violence to increase accountability and (3) support the officers of our state in their response to family violence crime. We recommend some major changes, and some that are very subtle that we believe will have a strong impact on the overall response to domestic violence. These operational guidelines will provide standardization as to how domestic violence is responded to in departments across the state. Section 17 addresses the model law enforcement policy and Section 18 calls for an establishment of a Family Violence Model Policy Governing Council. I believe that the recommendations will benefit officers in their response to domestic violence which will be positive for the victims seeking assistance. I hope you feel the same way. I or any of the other task force members would be more than happy to answer any questions you might have. Thank you.

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