

**Testimony for Judiciary Committee, April 15, 2013 on
HB 6702 -- AAC Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

Respectfully submitted by
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Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony regarding House Bill 6702. Susan B. Anthony Project is a member of both the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services. Susan B. Anthony Project provides crisis and support services for victims of both domestic and sexual violence.

This bill has several provisions that are critical to the safety and well being of domestic violence victims. In particular, the financial support, not terminating utility services, and restraining the respondent from damaging real and personal property are provisions that all will add to the safety and well being of victims. 98% of abusive relationships include financial abuse. It's critical that the law provide financial protections as it is a way to protect victims from becoming homeless and at greater danger for further abuse.

Section 4 of this bill provides for much needed training on domestic violence for GALs. Currently GALs may be involved in very serious domestic violence cases with no understanding of the dynamics and cycle of domestic violence. It is critical that GALs understand the impact of domestic violence on children and understand that the abusive parent will often use the child to help control and manipulate the non-abuse parent.

Susan B. Anthony Project provides services to women and men who are victims of domestic violence. Section 6 provides important changes to the language in the statute that we fully support. Since victims of domestic violence are men and women, it's important that we use the language "domestic violence victims" which includes male victims.

Section 17 provides for a secure conference room in the courthouse for victims of family violence crimes and family violence victim advocates. This is necessary for the safety and confidentiality

of communication between a victim and the family violence victim advocate. In the Bantam Court in Susan B. Anthony Project's service area, the family violence victim advocate has a space that is sometimes available and sometimes used for other court purposes. This puts victims at risk in the courthouse where they are forced to meet with their advocates in the hallways or other public areas of the courthouse.

Sections 18 – 19, forfeiture of firearms, provides critical improved protection for forfeiture of firearms. As the law is today, the alleged perpetrator of family violence has time between the order to forfeit the weapon and the actual turning in of the weapons to use the weapon to harm the victim. Under the proposed bill, this loophole will be closed with a provision that a police officer will accompany the individual who will then transferring, delivering or surrendering the firearm.

Thank you for accepting my testimony and supporting this important bill which improves the response to victims of domestic violence and will enhance their safety.