

April 15, 2013

Judiciary Committee
Room 2500,
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: **Raised Bill No. 6702 - An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault,
SUPPORT for Section 1: Economic/Financial Protections for Victims in Restraining Orders**

Dear Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

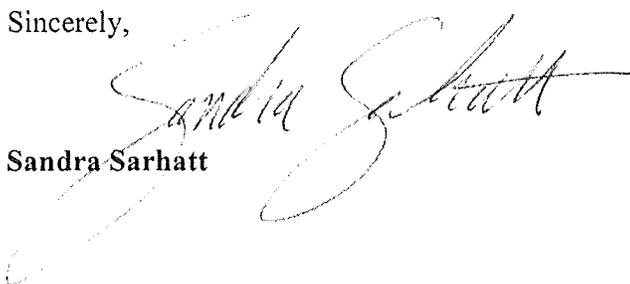
My name is **Sandra Sarhatt** I urge you to support the proposal in Raised Bill No. 6702 which would provide economic protections for victims of domestic violence as part of the restraining order proceeding.

Currently in our community, victims are making two different calculations when assessing whether to file for a restraining order. The first is whether and what type of a restraining order would provide them the most safety. In that calculus, most victims would seek to at least have their abuser removed from the home. However, the second calculus is what sort of retaliation they are going to suffer if they take that step. For too many victims, the retaliation looks like withholding the rent/mortgage payment, not providing money for basic necessities like groceries and medicine for the children, or refusing to relinquish critical identity documents like birth certificates. By amending C.G.S. § 46b-15 to specifically allow victims of domestic violence to obtain financial orders as part of the restraining order process, you are removing the abuser's ability to use economic survival as a means to coerce a victim into remaining in an abusive relationship.

More than 98% of abusive relationships involve some form of economic abuse. **Access to economic resources is the number one predictor of whether a victim will be able to successfully and permanently separate from her abuser.** The immediate days following a victim's decision to leave are often the most difficult. The victim is not only contending with the emotional trauma of the abuse, she must also find a safe place to live and the financial resources to care for herself and her children in the short term. Seeking orders of support through the family court often takes weeks if not months, even for *pendente lite* orders, particularly for low income and/or pro se victims unfamiliar with navigating the complex family court system. The ability to obtain economic relief during the restraining order process provides a victim with breathing room to keep her and her children safe while she gets those family court petitions started. **More than 37 states across the country currently provide this type of relief to victims through restraining orders.**

For those reasons, I urge you to support the language as currently drafted in the raised bill.*

Sincerely,


Sandra Sarhatt

*Provided that the word "ceasing" is removed.