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

April 15, 2012

Re: Support for Raised Bill No. 6702, Section 1: Economic/Financial Protections for Victims in Restraining Orders (46b-15)

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

My name is Dede Bartlett. I write to express my strong support for the proposed amendment in Raised Bill No. 6702 which would provide economic protections for victims of domestic violence as part of the restraining order proceeding.

Access to economic resources is the greatest predictor of whether or not a victim will permanently separate from her abuser. Because 98% of all abusive relationships include some form of financial abuse, victims are often at the economic mercy of their abusers. Abusers use economic abuse as a tactic to manipulate and control their victim – thinking that if she has no money, no job, and no access to financial resources, she will never be able to leave. For all too many victims, that proves to be true. **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 giving victims and their children the resources they need to be able to safely and successfully remove themselves from an abusive situation.**

According to the American Bar Association, at least 37 other states have created economic protections such as the one proposed in Raised Bill No. 6702 (specifically the ability to obtain child support and/or spousal support orders). The proposed changes would bring Connecticut in line with the overwhelming national trend and provide critical protections for victims.

As noted by prominent organizations such as the Battered Women's Justice Project and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the goal of the restraining order is to secure the safety of the victim. My community has seen time and again that the safety of the victim is inextricably tied to access to financial resources. Immediate financial protection could mean the difference between staying or leaving. CT's restraining order process can and should provide this level of protection.

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

Sincerely,

Dede Bartlett

*Provided that the word "ceasing" is removed from the bill when voted out of committee.