

Testimony of Elaine Peters submitted to the Judiciary committee in favor of bill 6702. AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT.

Thank you Senator Coleman and Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am here today in favor of bill 6702 AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT.

My name is Meryll Eaton, I am the director of Advocacy and Education at Christian Community Action in New Haven. I am a co-founder of the No More Crumbs Coalition and work closely with Mothers for Justice. I am here today to share the testimony of Elaine Peters, who is a member of both groups.

Elaine is wearing a brilliant smile in this picture but, underneath her smile is a lifetime of pain and suffering because of domestic violence and sexual assault. Thank you for allowing me to share some of Elaine's words.

As a child, I frequently witnessed abuse as well as being a victim. Throughout my lifetime, I became involved in several abusive relationships that often resulted in life-threatening traumas, both emotional and physical. I thought it was always me. I didn't understand that other people's relationships didn't involve coercion, intimidation, threats and violence. The men in my life kept me isolated and afraid.

I have state insurance and all too often I did not get adequate medical care. I was shuffled along and not connected to the proper services. I would go to the doctor after number beatings and they chose not to see my black eyes, torn skin or broken legs, or even to order a rape kit. I was too broken to even know what to ask for and they didn't connect the dots to refer me to the wraparound services that would help me. Doctors, police, teachers, social workers, and other professionals need to be connected, and the victim or the guardians need education about services so they can utilize them.

For me, not having these services earlier in my life, I have learned to compartmentalize and lock these emotions away, coping using multiple art forms and becoming an advocate for others; but I still have experienced a lifetime of post-traumatic symptoms. I recently have been helped to understand that in order to heal, I must unlock some of those memories, but the process is so very, very painful that I am often in a state of despair. I apologize that I was not able to be here today to share my testimony but, sharing my story in person takes so much of me, that I need a day or two to recover from the experience.

Today, I asking you to make sure that my testimony makes a difference.. that you pass bill 6072 and ny other bill that will make Connecticut a safer place for people who are threatened with domestic violence and that trauma informed care insures that wrap around service are available for those of us who have been unfortunate enough to need them. Thank you.