

April 12, 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:

Our names are Jacqueline D'Louhy and Anthony Phillips. We are urging 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 the New Canaan community that we work in, victims struggle with whether to file for a restraining order for multiple reasons. The first is whether and what type of a restraining order would provide them the most safety for themselves and their minor children. During this decision, many victims would prefer the safest outcome of having their abuser removed from the home. However, the major concern for the victim is always what retaliation they will face if they take that step. For the hundreds of victims we have worked with over the years, the retaliation looks like withholding the rent/mortgage payment, having utilities shut off for non-payment, not providing money for basic necessities like groceries and medicine for the children, having cars repossessed 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,

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Anthony Phillips, LCSW/Youth and Family Services Coordinator for the Town of New Canaan and Co-Chair of the New Canaan Domestic Violence Partnership Anthony.phillips@newcanaanct.gov (203) 594-3081

*Provided that the word "ceasing" is removed.