Testimony of Paola Serrecchia on behalf of William Ramirez 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 Paola Serrecchia and I was working as a care coordinator at Clifford Beers Guidance Clinic when William's family was referred to me. William, his four siblings and his mother were suffering the effects of trauma inflicted by the domestic violence perpetrated on them by their father/stepfather. He had access to multiple weapons and had repeatedly threatened to shoot and kill William's mother.

The children were at risk of being removed from the home and institutionalized by DCF. I was able to access wrap around services and build a team that put in place a care plan that included transportation, childcare, special education for the children, safe and affordable housing, domestic violence counseling, individual therapy for the children and other intervention programs.

The perpetrator was incarcerated and a protective order was put in place. The family was able to move into a safe home where the children could play in their backyard and healing began. Wrap around flex funding paid for the mother to obtain her GED and take a certification program in forensic science. She got a job working at the Hartford Police Department and started making plans to go to college.

Within one year, William's mother contacted me in desperation and agony. She had heard on the street and from the perpetrator's family that he was "coming out" and he is coming to "get you". He was not required to turn in his weapons when the protective order was mandated.

We contacted the court victim advocate to find out why the family was not informed that their abuser was going to be released. She had not informed us, because she was not aware of the pending release. She was able to confirm the story was correct.

After ten years of living in Connecticut, the family had to abruptly uproot themselves within one week to flee to Puerto Rico to live. The family was then broken up and the children were sent to live with different family members in Puerto Rico and across the United States. We attempted our best to coordinate services across states, but were unable to put in place all the services that the children and their mother needed.

Two years later the family was not doing well. The mother had used the care coordination model and her acquired advocacy skills that she learned being part of our No More Crumbs coalition to access services for her family but, they were not able to get the trauma informed care they needed and they desperately wanted to be together.

The perpetrator had moved out of state and she wanted to move back to Connecticut. I am still at Clifford Beers but now have responsibilities as a family advocate. The family is working hard to move on with their lives. Please pass bill 6702 so that other families do not have to go through what William's family went through. If passed, the perpetrator would have to have given up his weapons when the protective order was mandated and the parole officer would have had to inform the court victim advocate which would have given us more time to put a plan in place.

Please don't let this happen to another family. Thank you for your time.