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State Victim Advocate

Testimony of Garvin G. Ambrose, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
March 17, 2014

Good day Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is Garvin Ambrose and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

Raised Senate Bill No. 462, An Act Concerning Civil Restraining and Protective Orders

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) fully **supports** Raised Senate Bill No. 462, as the proposal would provide financial protections for family violence victims who seek ex-parte and restraining orders; establishes a task force to study issues relating to the service of restraining orders by state marshals; and strengthens the criminal penalties for violations of civil restraining orders and criminal protective orders.

Research indicates that financial abuse is experienced in 98% of abusive relationships and surveys of survivors reflect that concerns over their ability to provide financially for themselves and their children was one of the top reasons for staying in or returning to a battering relationship. Additionally, we know from the many calls that we receive at the OVA that financial retaliation of a family violence abuser sometimes occurs when a family violence victim avails herself of a restraining order. Family violence victims who fear that their abuser will shut off their utilities or discontinue to provide for basic household needs and services, may jeopardize their safety and remain in an abusive home simply to maintain their financial safety net.

Raised Senate Bill No. 462 provides family violence victims with the opportunity to seek financial protections from the family court when applying for an ex-parte order or a restraining order. If granted, the court could impose immediate injunctive relief to prohibit the respondent of the order from taking any action to shut off household utilities or other necessary services related to the family dwelling or the victim's dwelling, and from canceling any health, automobile or homeowner's insurance. The court could impose additional financial relief to the victim at the time of the restraining order hearing.

Raised Senate Bill No. 462 also strengthens the penalty from a D Felony to a C Felony for any violation of a restraining order or protective order where the respondent of the order

imposes any restraint upon the victim or the victim's liberty or threatens, harasses, assaults, molests, sexually assaults or attacks the victim. This enhanced penalty will serve to severely punish respondents for engaging in overt acts that are in violation of a restraining order or protective order as the penalties associated with a C Felony include a maximum jail term of ten years and a fine of up to \$10,000.

Lastly, Section 3 of the proposal establishes a much needed task force to examine service of process of restraining orders by state marshals. The OVA is pleased to serve on the task force and looks forward to working collaboratively with others to improve this vital component to the safety of family violence victims.

For these reasons, the OVA **supports** Raised Senate Bill No. 462. I thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Garvin G. Ambrose', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Garvin G. Ambrose, Esq.