

Judiciary Committee

HB 5593, AAC Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

*Submitted by: Krystal Rich, Adult Advocate, Sexual Assault Crisis Service, a program of the YWCA
New Britain*

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and honorable members of the Committee, my name is Krystal Rich and I am one of the Adult Advocates for the Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS), a program of the YWCA New Britain. As an Adult Advocate for an organization that serves sexual assault survivors and their loved ones, I have seen first-hand the horrendous effects this crime has on our society. Today I would like to offer my support for the inclusion of expanded access to restraining orders for all victims in HB 5593, AAC Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

Victims of sexual assault and stalking deserve, at the very least, to have some form of protection from their perpetrator. Currently, sexual assault and stalking victims can only obtain a civil restraining order if their aggressor was, or is, a family or household member. Victims whose aggressor is a friend, acquaintance, or stranger are not permitted to obtain a restraining order and are forced to live their lives in fear. The only other form of protection offered is a criminal protective order which is only available if their aggressor is arrested and the case is brought to court. The unfortunate reality is that the rates of arrests in these situations are very low and most sexual assault cases never even make it to the court room. Additionally, victims should not be subjected to the possible re-victimization associated with the court process to receive some form of protection. This is not about courts, this is not about paperwork, this is about people and their right to feel safe.

Given that 40.8% of all victims are assaulted by an acquaintance, it is not surprising, given the current law, that I have seen an alarming number of individuals who are denied the opportunity to be protected through a restraining order. Each time I am asked the same question- why would a system set-up to protect citizens deny people who have already been victimized the chance to be protected? The only thing I can offer to these survivors is a sense of hope that our state will soon make the changes necessary to afford every victim of sexual violence or stalking the opportunity to obtain a restraining order. These individuals live in fear for their lives each day and their safety should not be contingent on the relationship between them and their perpetrator.

I think we can all agree that we want to protect everyone from enduring the effects that are associated with sexual violence and stalking. Passing HB 5593 will take us one step closer in that direction.

I hope you will join me in supporting HB 5593

Thank you for your time.

Krystal Rich, Adult Advocate, Sexual Assault Crisis Service, a program of the YWCA New Britain
(860) 225-4681 x 214_krich@ywcaneubritain.org