

Bill 462

In 2013 I worked with a female victim who lost everything when she filed a restraining order against her former abuser. They resided in Massachusetts and had two small children. After the birth of their second child she started to have concerns. The victim reported he began staying out very late at night drinking with his friends and she suspected his drug use.

During the next few months she and her abuser had numerous arguments about his behaviors. He would drink excessively and physically abused her if the cooking or cleaning was not done to his liking. There were times this occurred in front of their children. He would force himself on her even though she would tell him no. The victim attempted to find employment to provide for their children and save her own money but he did not allow her to leave the home. He only provided her minimal amounts of money to care for the children and pick up groceries when he allowed it. The abuser also did not allow her to have friends and minimal contact with her own family. The abuser also kept important documents such as birth certificates, insurance cards, and social security cards with him. The victim stayed with him hoping that one day he would change.

There was a time she contemplated leaving and informed her abuser she was. He became so angry he hit her numerous times causing marks and bruises. He told her if she leaves with the children he will contact Massachusetts Child Protection and the police, saying "she kidnapped the children". She received no medical attention and hid the bruising from family. The victim continued to stay with him and the abuse continued. Eventually, she contacted family about the long term abuse. One day when abuser was out with his friends, her family went to Massachusetts and helped her pack and leave with the children to live in Connecticut.

I spoke with the victim and her family several times in Connecticut and she retold the stories of abuse. She was so frustrated with the system. The victim contacted the Connecticut and Massachusetts police about the long term abuse. She was informed there is nothing they can do as he resides in another state now and she was safe and do to the children's ages they were not impacted. The victim's mother was able to encourage her to file for a restraining order despite the victim's fears of what the abuser may do when he was served. When the abuser was served the paperwork the victim's fears came true.

The abuser sent her numerous threatening e-mails, texts, and letters. Some stating he was going to come and kill her or find someone to do it for him. He also terminated her and their children insurance so the victim was not able to take them to doctor's appointments. The victim became more upset when she was informed she could not apply for state insurance without being a state of CT resident. She explained the current situation but was again denied. The abuser also stated he would provide not provide any money to the victim or their children. This left the victim with no financial support and nowhere to live with her children.

This really upset the victim but she knew she had to do something for the sake of her children. Despite the financial hardship she was placed in with her children and the fear of homeless, she was able to turn her life around. With the help of the agency and her family she was able to reside with a family member long term, find employment, counseling, and locate an appropriate childcare provider. Mother still

resides safely in Connecticut with her children. She still admits the past affects her. When this happens she talks with her counselor and her family. Both are able to talk to her about her concerns, safety plan, and boost her self-esteem.

Bill No. 462, an Act Concerning Civil Restraining and Protective Orders needs to be reviewed and amended. This victim stayed in a very volatile relationship in fear of repercussion if she took action against her abuser. Those fears did come true. Thankfully, she had the support of family members who helped her get back on her feet. What about the other men and women still their relationships due to fear of repercussions? They may not be as lucky to have family and friends to support them. Financial abuse often leaves victims entirely depending on their abuser with little to no ability to financially care for themselves or their children. This is a reason that victims frequently cite for not leaving. I urge you to strongly consider the bill and add protection for victims who are willing to leave a domestic violence relationship or already have so they and their children are not placed in a financial hardship.

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