Susan B. Anthony Project
SAFETY • HEALING • GROWTH

179 Water Street
Torrington, Connecticut 06790
860-489-3798
www.sbaproject.org

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Testimony Regarding
HB 6824, AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2017, and Making Appropriations Therefore and Other Provisions Related to Revenue
Department of Social Services Budget
Appropriations Committee

March 2, 2015

To: Senator Bye,
Representative Walker,
Senator Flexer,
Representative Abercrombie and
members of the committee

From: Barbara Spiegel
Executive Director
Susan B. Anthony Project
860-489-3798
bspiegel@sbaproject.org

Susan B. Anthony Project (SBAP) is one of the member programs of CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV)--the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence.

Susan B. Anthony Project provides services to approximately 2,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, transitional housing, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

Potential Impact of the Closure of the Torrington Regional DSS Office:

Susan B. Anthony Project' service area includes the following towns: Barkhamsted, Colebrook, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Litchfield, Morris, New Hartford, Norfolk, Thomaston, Torrington, Warren, Washington, and Winchester. Residents of these towns receive services in the DSS office in Torrington. Closing this office would be devastating to the victims in these areas who need to access DSS services.

As you know, many clients receiving DSS support do not have their own cars. Instead they rely on public transportation, which is almost nonexistent in Torrington and the surrounding towns. Lack of public transportation is very challenging for clients living in Torrington, let alone those living as far away as Washington or Hartland. Even if the individual is fortunate enough to have

their own car, drive times from the outskirts of this area to Torrington are already lengthy and costly.

If SBAP clients must travel to Waterbury to go to the DSS office, they will be forced to take additional time off work, pay additional for childcare, and spend more on gas to attend a meeting.

For clients who don't own their own cars, this will become extremely challenging or impossible. If they must rely on the incredibly scarce public transportation available in the Northwest corner, a meeting at the Waterbury DSS office may be impossible. Transportation by the Northwestern CT Transit District utilizes 5 fixed routes Monday through Friday and 1 route on Saturday. These routes are for fixed areas/towns allowing for travel within a particular town, but not between towns. A Dial-A-Ride service is provided, but it must be booked in advance and is dependent on availability as it is a small chartered bus that can only accommodate a limited number of people. Honestly, these programs don't work well to meet individualized needs.

Taxi service is also limited in the Northwest corner, and travel from Torrington to Waterbury is 20 miles and from Hartland to Waterbury is 41 miles. This is certainly not affordable for clients who receive services from DSS.

Victims receiving services from SBAP are often fortunate enough to have SBAP staff transport them to the DSS office. With the current situation, this is very time and resource consuming. Closing the Torrington Regional Office will mean even more staff time and even more financial resources will be needed to provide this high level of service and assist victims with getting to Waterbury.

If SBAP cannot afford to transport and accompany a client to a DSS appointment, this will leave the most vulnerable clients even more vulnerable.

We recognize the incredibly difficult financial position the state is in, but we strongly encourage you to maintain the Torrington Regional Office of DSS and ensure that basic human services remain available and easily accessible in this area. It is simply unrealistic to think that individuals receiving DSS subsidies and services have the resources to easily travel further for those services given the lack of public transportation in Connecticut in general, but especially in the Northwest corner of the state.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.