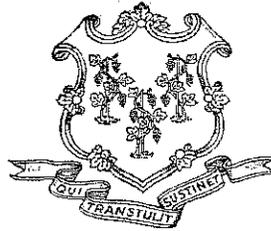


SENATOR MAE FLEXER

Twenty-ninth District

Legislative Office Building
Room 1800
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Tel. 860-240-8634

www.SenatorFlexer.cga.ct.gov



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Testimony of Senator Mae Flexer
In Support of S.B. 303, An Act Concerning Children Exposed to Family Violence
The Committee on Children
February 5, 2015

Good Morning Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Committee on Children. I offer this testimony in support of S.B. 203, An Act Concerning Children Exposed to Family Violence.

First, I want to thank Senate President Martin Looney for making this bill a priority, and for bringing attention to this important issue. I also want to thank the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Office of the Child Advocate for their work on this legislation. I have been working on the issue of domestic violence for many years, first as a member of the House of Representatives, and I'm happy to continue that work now as state Senator.

Domestic violence is a persistent and pernicious problem within our culture, and within our state, and its effects on children can be severe and traumatic. In 2014 – in one month alone – five young children in Connecticut were present as their mothers were killed by their fathers.

In households that experience domestic violence, half are households with children. Most of these households experience multiple instances of violence, and many of the children witnessing these events are under the age of eight-years-old. Exposure to these events puts children at risk for lifelong problems affecting their physical and mental health, their relationships and behavior. They are often burdened with guilt and shame because they assume they should have intervened, or that they themselves were the cause. Violence can be psychological as well as physical, and both are cause for great concern.

It is critical that the State of Connecticut improve and streamline its data collection in order to better understand how and why children are exposed to family violence. We must work harder to prevent and deal with the long-term consequences of family violence, and do more to protect the children and parents who are the victims of violence.

This bill offers us the opportunity to review our policies and practices across multiple state agencies with respect to intervention and prevention remedies for children exposed to family violence, and to develop statewide standards and protocols to support these children in both the immediate aftermath and over the long-term.

Thank you very much for your consideration, and I offer my strong support for this important piece of legislation.