

Testimony Regarding HB 5044, AA Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017

Dear Members of the Appropriation Committee:

Please take this true story into consideration when weighing the pros and cons of any budget cuts to domestic violence services in Connecticut and the importance of keeping domestic violence services as a separate line item in the state budget.

The Center for Family Justice is a member program of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence located in Bridgeport, CT. The Center serves the towns of Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull.

The Center for Family Justice breaks the cycle of abuse and violence – domestic, sexual and child – by providing services that create hope, restore lives and drive social change through education and community collaboration.

Testimony Concerning Impact of 2016 State of Connecticut Budget Cuts

Respectfully, I oppose reductions in funding for services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Great progress has been made with providing assistance for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Funding cuts will weaken the ability of domestic violence and sexual assault agencies in Connecticut from continuing to advocate for and support such victims. Victims need the representation provided by all advocates including court based victim advocates. Many victims do not understand the complex legal process and what is required of them in order to remain safe from perpetrators. The good work of advocates cannot be weakened due to budget cuts, but rather, should be strengthened through continued monetary support. Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault deserve the protections provided by our judicial system. We must stand together and continue moving forward by not taking away from this invaluable support. Moving backwards cannot be considered as an option. Budget cuts will cripple the ability of victims to get back on their feet and remain strong for themselves and their families. In many cases, victims and their families are left with nothing and without a voice.

Many will be negatively impacted with proposed budget cuts. Violent perpetrators will not stop victimizing and destroying lives of innocent victims. We as a society must continue to stand for voiceless victims. They have been silenced in many ways for too long. Funding cuts will result in greater vulnerability among those who already are vulnerable and with nowhere to turn. Progress and positive

change have been witnessed, however, much work remains to be done. We must continue to provide support rather than reduce services. Let us continue to build on the momentum that has been established, and continue educating our children and young adults to deal with conflict without violence. Let's also continue to strengthen agencies such as the first Center for Family Justice in Connecticut. Good work and progress will diminish as a result of reductions in funding.

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

The Center for Family Justice
753 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT
(203) 334-6154

Point of Contact: Deb Greenwood, CEO/President
dgreenwood@centerforfamilyjustice.org