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Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate  
Submitted to the Education Committee  
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Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and distinguished members of the Education Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

**Senate Bill No. 319**, An Act Concerning Notification to Schools of Protective or Restraining Orders Affecting Students (**Recommended Amendment**)

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) supports Senate Bill No. 319 as it will provide notification to a public school when the court grants an order of protection on behalf of a student. However, the OVA has concerns with a portion of Section 1, lines 19-24.

Inherent in the issuance of an order of protection is a determination, made by a Superior Court Judge, that an identified person is at imminent risk of harm by a named respondent. As a result of this determination, the Judge imposes certain conditions upon the respondent, which may include no assaultive behavior, no contact or to stay a specified distance away from the protected party. The language in lines 19-24 suggests that school personnel, after receipt of the order of protection, will "assess the risk of danger" and effectuate an appropriate modification of the educational plan or placement of either the protected person or the respondent of the order. The school personnel need only to ensure that the conditions imposed upon the respondent, pursuant to the order of protection, are adhered to within the school environment.

The OVA has received calls from many victims, also students, who have obtained an order of protection against another student, and the usual response by the school is to alter or remove the protected person from the school environment under the guise of protection, while the respondent of the order has little disruption to his/her schedule. The OVA recognizes that in certain circumstances, the protected person's educational plan may very well require adjustments, however, the OVA strongly believes that it should be the respondent's educational plan that is first impacted to meet the conditions of the order of protection.

**To ensure that a protected person is not inadvertently penalized for seeking an order of protection, the OVA recommends that the Committee amend Section 1 to include the following language:**

On line 22, delete the following language, “assessing the risk of danger posed by or to such person” and replace with, “reviewing the conditions imposed by the court on the named respondent”

On line 24, after “purposes.”, insert the following language, “Every effort shall be made to limit any modification of the protected person’s educational plan or placement. No school shall penalize, threaten or otherwise coerce a student because the student has applied for or been granted an order of protection against another student.”

On line 25, delete “assessment” and replace with “review”

The OVA appreciates the efforts of schools to ensure the safety of all its students. Senate Bill No. 319, with the recommended amendment, will serve to enhance those efforts after intervention by a court through the issuance of an order of protection. I strongly urge the Committee’s favorable report of Senate Bill No. 319, as amended.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony.