

Hello,

My name is Hannah Kalichman; I am a Domestic Violence Advocate for the United Services Domestic Violence Program. I work within the emergency shelters as well as on our 24-hour hotline. I am in favor of Governor's Bill No. 5054; before I get into my specific motivations for my support I would like to put this issue into perspective. Imagine three women or four men who are important in your life. Family members, friends, significant others; now imagine one of them; have them pictured clearly in your mind's eye. According to statistics one in three women and one in four men in the United States will experience some form of violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime. Imagine this one person in your mind, being manipulated emotionally, controlled financially, harassed verbally and threatened physically. While Domestic Violence looks different for individuals, the overall need for protecting the victim survivor is consistent and very real. The threat of firearms has only become more extreme in recent months. A lot of thought and bravery goes into applying for a restraining order, the applicant must relive their trauma in the affidavit; they must brave the outside world and appear in court to face their abuser. Power and control are what define a domestic violence situation. By applying for a restraining order the victim survivor is putting themselves at extreme risk, the fact that an angry respondent still may have access to their firearms is absolutely terrifying, it may even deter victims from leaving abusive situations in fear of their abuser's reaction.

If this bill were to pass, victims would be assured that if they step forward and apply for protection, our legal system would have the means in place to follow through. There would be assurance that firearms would be removed within 48 hours not '2 business days' which can easily transform into a long weekend or holiday where a dangerous abuser has access to firearms and quite the motive to retaliate and regain their control. This bill would also add that there is a *consequence* for not following a court order to surrender weapons. This to me makes perfect sense, as with any court order there is a consequence if a respondent doesn't comply. If someone can get a bench warrant for not appearing for a traffic violation surely there should be a consequence if firearms are not surrendered.

Although I have not been in the field of social work for very long, I have already helped numerous victim survivors fill out applications for restraining orders. Every time it has been an emotional and difficult process. The application often makes the abuse a reality as well as solidifies the dangers of standing up to an abuser. The victim must recount in detail the abuse they have suffered, and then must go to court and risk confrontation with their abuser in order to obtain relief from on going, sometimes life long, abuse. If I were able to assure my clients that the court would be able to require the respondent to surrender their weapons, and that there would be repercussions if they don't, I think would greatly help them in trusting the process.

Domestic Violence is often dismissed because it is seen as a 'private' or 'female' issue. In reality domestic violence affects, men, people of the LGBTQ community, children, students, roommates and of course women. This is an issue of the home, but no one deserves to endure abuse in the place that should be a place of peace and refuge from the outside world. I am in support of this bill so that no one will have to endure the fear and intimidation of domestic violence. So victim survivors will feel supported in their efforts to find relief from abuse and feel safe with the decision they make to trust the system and the legal process.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration

Sincerely,

Hannah Kalichman