Testimony in support of
SB 429 – An Act Concerning Service of Restraining Orders
Jessica Becker
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Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Jessica Becker, and I am a master of social work student at the University of Connecticut. Last year, as a public policy intern at Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund, I followed the work of the Task Force on Connecticut Restraining Orders, which met from September, 2014 through January, 2015.

I am here to testify in support of **SB 429 – An Act Concerning Service of Restraining Orders.** This bill would allow victims of domestic violence who are obtaining a restraining order to choose a police officer to serve the order when they have indicated that the respondent may have access to firearms. There are many advantages to allowing victims to choose police officers to serve the orders, and I believe applicants should have the option to select police officers in all circumstances.

First, police officers are equipped to locate offenders easier and quicker than marshals. Currently a major problem is that many restraining orders are never served, leaving victims unprotected. State marshals are the people responsible for serving restraining orders in this state. One of the main reasons that they do not serve the orders is because they lack the resources to locate respondents. Police officers have access to civil and criminal databases which allow them to locate defendants to serve them orders. Allowing applicants to choose a police officer to serve the restraining order will result in more restraining orders served at faster rates.

Second, allowing victims to choose police officers to serve restraining orders relieves victims of the burden of finding a marshal. Marshals can be very difficult to reach as they are only available at the courthouse for two thirty minute intervals in the day. For victims who choose police officers to serve their orders, this bill states that the order will be sent to a law enforcement agency within two hours, relieving the applicant of the burden of finding an available marshal.

A third advantage is that police officers are armed and trained to deescalate violent and situations that may arise when serving abusers with restraining orders. Police officers are better equipped than marshals to handle volatile situations and situations when the offender is armed.

Police officers can serve an important role in the service of restraining orders and lead to better outcomes for victims who choose to use them. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.