

Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and members of the committee. Safe Futures of Southeastern Connecticut provides lifesaving services to over 5,000 victims of domestic violence and sexual assault annually. Direct service programs include our 24 Hour Hotline, Emergency Shelter, Counseling and Advocacy Offices, Criminal Court based and Law Enforcement Advocates and our Transitional Living Program.

We urge you to support House Bill 5054 and House Bill 5623.

The goal of HB 5054 and sections 1-17 of HB 5623 is simple, to protect victims of domestic violence at the most dangerous time by temporarily removing firearms from their abusers when they have received notice that they are subject to a temporary, ex-parte restraining order.

In my 22 years working for Safe Futures, I have interviewed thousands of victims of domestic violence. I would have loved to have a victim testify today and even though they were eager to see these changes, they were reluctant to speak publicly.

I am a licensed revolver permit holder in the State of Connecticut. My current permit expires in 2018. My father is a retired school educator and also taught gun safety classes. His guns were always locked away. When I was going through my divorce a few years back, he called to ask if he could take my gun until things were settled. Although I knew I would not use the gun, I did not hesitate. I had a teenage daughter in the home and my ex-husband was going through a personal emotional time. I felt the need to protect everyone.

I had an experience as a child that impacted my life forever. My parents were separating and I remember my mother and father arguing. My mother was asking my father to leave as she discovered his infidelities. My four siblings and I were there so my parents went outside to talk. The next thing I heard was my father yelling, saying just take the gun and shoot me. I didn't know what was happening. All of us ran to the door and saw my father had a gun in his hand and kept telling my mother to take it and shoot him. This was extremely terrifying for all of us.

I look back and I am grateful that my mother is a gentle soul who wouldn't touch the gun, that my older sisters did not try to intervene and accidentally get shot, and that my father did not turn the gun on himself. My parents are educated and normally civil adults and I am fortunate that we are all here today.

When domestic violence entered into the equation, the outcomes can be grave. The number of IPV homicides that you have does not include the innocent bystanders or the suicide victims.

Just as victims are reluctant to speak publicly, they are also reluctant to involve the police. For these reasons we ask that it be the process to remove guns when an ex parte order is granted for everyone's safety until things have settled down.