

Testimony in Support

Member Organizations

SB 1011, AA Increasing the Marriage License Fee and Surcharge

Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee

March 17, 2017

**The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services**  
Ansonia, CT

**The Center for Family Justice**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Women's Center**  
Danbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program United Services**  
Dayville, CT

**Network Against Domestic Abuse**  
Enfield, CT

**Domestic Abuse Services Greenwich YWCA**  
Greenwich, CT

**Interval House**  
Hartford, CT

**Chrysalis Domestic Violence Services**  
Meriden, CT

**New Horizons**  
Middletown, CT

**Prudence Crandall Center**  
New Britain, CT

**The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services**  
New Haven, CT

**Safe Futures**  
New London, CT

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**  
Norwalk, CT

**Women's Support Services**  
Sharon, CT

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**  
Stamford, CT

**Susan B. Anthony Project**  
Torrington, CT

**Safe Haven**  
Waterbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program United Services**  
Willimantic, CT

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara, Senator Frantz, Representative Rojas and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those organizations that serve them. Our 18 member organizations provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, agency/staff training, support groups and court advocacy.

**We urge your support of SB 1011, which will increase revenue to support domestic and sexual violence services provided by community-based nonprofits in Connecticut.**

The Marriage License Surcharge (MLS) is a fee paid by those obtaining a marriage license in Connecticut. Since its implementation in 1992, the MLS has not been increased from the current amount of \$20. The surcharge is distributed as follows:

- \$1 is retained by the municipality
- \$19 is deposited into a fund for equal distribution by the Department of Public Health to support sexual violence services and the Department of Social Services to support domestic violence services.

Under this proposal, the MLS will be increased to \$35, which means that \$34 will go directly to support services provided by community-based nonprofits to victims of domestic and sexual violence. Marriages in Connecticut have held steady in recent years with approximately 19,000 marriage licenses obtained per year. This means that annual revenue to help support domestic and sexual violence services could increase to about \$646,000 per year.

Economic and fiscal challenges continue to impact domestic and sexual violence services at both ends - financial supports are being reduced for service providers while victims seeking our help are experiencing more acute, complex problems due to the impact of the economy on their own personal lives. In FY 2016 our members provided services to **39,661 victims of domestic violence across the state**, including housing **over 2,300 victims in emergency shelter**. This included **over 1,000 children in shelter, 69% of whom were 6 years old or younger**. On average, **victims remained in shelter for 46 days, which is a 77% increase in the average length of stay over the past 8 years**. The increased length of stay was a significant contributing factor to **shelters running, on average, at 125% capacity** throughout FY16. With flat or reduced state General Fund dollars available for victim services, we urge your support to increase this alternate source of revenue.

If passed, the total cost for a marriage license in Connecticut would become \$50 (this includes the \$35 MLS and the license fee that is retained entirely by the municipality). This is comparable to surrounding states with statewide marriage license fees, including New Hampshire (\$50 total fee, which includes a \$43 MLS) and Vermont (\$60 total fee, which includes a \$35 MLS). The proposal impacts a

(OVER)

limited number of Connecticut residents, including a number of non-residents who choose to get married at any number of premiere wedding venues in the state and therefore obtain a Connecticut marriage license.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Liza Andrews  
Director of Public Policy & Communications  
[landrews@ctcadv.org](mailto:landrews@ctcadv.org)

# SUPPORT DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES INCREASE CONNECTICUT'S MARRIAGE LICENSE SURCHARGE

## SUPPORT SB 1011

### WHAT DOES IT DO?

The Marriage License Surcharge (MLS) is a fee paid by those obtaining a marriage license in Connecticut. Since its implementation in 1992, the MLS has not been increased from the current amount of \$20. The surcharge is distributed as follows:

- \$1 is retained by the municipality
- \$19 is deposited into a fund for equal distribution by the Department of Public Health to support sexual violence services and the Department of Social Services to support domestic violence services.

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence urge the General Assembly to increase **Connecticut's Marriage License Surcharge** (MLS) (§7-73) to **\$35** to support essential domestic and sexual violence services.

### WHAT DOES FUNDING SUPPORT?

Funding is allocated to each of the state's community-based domestic and sexual violence organizations (see reverse side for list of providers) to support a variety of critical victim services such as:

- Statewide crisis hotlines
- Short- and long-term counseling
- Victim accompaniment in hospital or police settings
- Maintain and improve shelter infrastructure
- Transportation costs

**Economic and fiscal challenges continue to impact domestic and sexual violence services** at both ends - financial supports are being reduced for service providers while victims seeking our help are experiencing more acute, complex problems due to the impact of the economy on their own personal lives.

### HOW DOES THIS PROPOSAL CHANGE FUNDING?

#### *Current MLS:*

- In addition to the current MLS (\$20), there is a \$10 license fee that is retained by the municipality, making the total existing cost of a marriage license in Connecticut \$30.
- There are approximately 19,000 marriage licenses issued in Connecticut each year meaning that the \$19 of the MLS dedicated to domestic and sexual violence services generates an average of \$361,000 annually.

#### *Impact of Proposal:*

- Under this proposal, the surcharge would be raised to \$35. The bill also proposes increasing the fee retained by the municipality to \$15, making the **total cost of a marriage license \$50**.
- As \$34 of the increased surcharge would be allocated to support domestic and sexual violence services, a **potential total of \$646,000 could be generated annually**.

The proposal impacts a limited number of Connecticut residents, including a number of non-residents who choose to get married at any number of premiere wedding venues in the state and therefore obtain a Connecticut marriage license.

### WHAT ARE OTHER STATES DOING?

While most states assess surcharges by county, some of Connecticut's neighboring states have increased their statewide surcharges to better support services, including:

- New Hampshire with a \$50 surcharge, \$43 of which funds domestic violence services
- Vermont with a \$60 surcharge, \$35 of which funds domestic violence and sexual assault services

*Please contact us with questions:*

Kaitlyn Fydenkevez, Esq. | CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence | [kaitlyn@endsexualviolencect.org](mailto:kaitlyn@endsexualviolencect.org) | 860.282.9881

Liza Andrews | CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence | [landrews@ctcadv.org](mailto:landrews@ctcadv.org) | 860.282.7899

# OUR MEMBERS

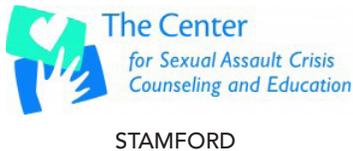
These are the organizations that will receive additional funding from any increase to the marriage license surcharge.

## DUAL ORGANIZATIONS:

(provide both domestic and sexual violence services)



## SEXUAL VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS:



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS:

