

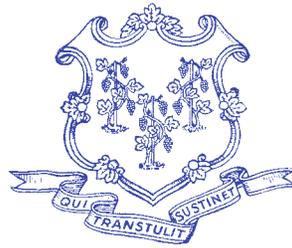
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**Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Public Hearing
March 17, 2017**

**Testimony of Senator Mae Flexer In Support of
Senate Bill 1011, *An Act Increasing the Marriage License Fee and Surcharge***

Representative Rojas, Senator Fonfara, Senator Frantz, and members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee: thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong **support** of **Raised Senate Bill 1011, *An Act Increasing the Marriage License Fee and Surcharge***. I'm very grateful to the committee for raising this bill, which will generate additional funding to support community-based services for victims of domestic and sexual violence in Connecticut by increasing the marriage license surcharge (MLS) from \$20 to \$35.

The current \$20 MLS has not increased since its implementation in 1992. Of that \$20, \$1 is retained by the municipality, and \$19 is deposited into a fund for distribution by the Department of Public Health and the Department of Social Services to support community-based domestic violence and sexual assault programs. The funds support a variety of critically important victim services, including statewide crisis hotlines, shelter infrastructure, and counseling and victim accompaniment services.

Should SB 1011 become law, the \$19 allocated for victim services would increase to \$34. This would bring us closer to matching neighboring states, which have increased their statewide surcharge fees to better support victim services. For example, New Hampshire now charges a \$50 fee, of which \$43 funds domestic violence services, and Vermont charges a \$60 fee, of which \$35 funds domestic violence and sexual assault services.

The timeliness and urgency for this bill is made only greater in light of our fiscal challenges, which have detrimentally impacted victim services. In addition, we must also consider the recent federal budget proposed by the Trump Administration, and the likelihood that services for victims of domestic and sexual violence will be decimated. I believe Connecticut must remain a leader on this issue, building on the tremendous work we have done in recent years.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important legislation.