



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Member Organizations**

**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

**Testimony Supporting**

**SB 880, AA Increasing Fairness and Transparency in the Criminal Justice System**

**HB 7314, AAC a Crime Victim's Participatory Rights in a Violation of Probation or Conditional Discharge Hearing**

**Judiciary Committee  
March 25, 2019**

Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who 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, support groups and court advocacy.

**We urge your support of SB 880.**

This bill is extremely important to understanding and strengthening the state's response to domestic violence as it relates to the criminal justice system. There are over 20,000 arrests for domestic violence annually in Connecticut, comprising approximately one third of Connecticut's criminal court docket. Having access to court and prosecutorial data related to these cases and their outcomes will help inform improved policies and practices.

One area of criminal justice transparency of particular importance to survivors of domestic violence is data related to nolle and dismissals. Nolle and dismissals in domestic violence cases are not necessarily bad, but knowing the reason for the nolle or dismissal is critical to understanding where the state's response to domestic violence can be improved.

In 2015 the state began requiring the use of domestic violence offender programs that meet state standards, which were developed using evidence-based national best practices related to behavior modification of domestic violence offenders. If a prosecutor is granting a nolle in a family violence case they must state in court the reason for the nolle and, "if the reasons include consideration of the defendant's participation in a counseling or treatment program, a representation that such counseling or treatment program complies with the program standards promulgated under section 46b-38f." (CGS. 54-56o) Unfortunately, prosecutors currently don't track this information and, therefore, it is not available to help inform policy changes.

It is our understanding that information related to nolle, dismissals and compliance with sanctions will be captured under "non-judicial sanctions" included in the proposed substitute language. The substitute language also requires reporting of data related to prosecutor contact with victims, which is also critical as victims should be given consistent opportunities to have their voice heard throughout the process. We urge the Committee to support this measure.

**We urge your support of HB 7314.**

This measure ensures that victims will be notified of and given the ability to make a statement in a violation of probation hearing. Currently the Connecticut Constitution

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gives victims the right to attend the trial and all other court proceedings the accused has the right to attend. Violation of probation (VOP) hearings are technically an extension of the sentencing, yet victims do not always have participatory rights at said hearings. This bill will ensure that victims can make a statement to the court at a VOP as to the impact of the violation on both the victim and her/his children. This is a victim-centered approach to informing the criminal justice system that we urge this Committee to support.

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

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