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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**

**HB 6520, AAC Temporary State Services for Victims of Domestic Violence**

**Human Services Committee**
**March 4, 2021**

Good afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case, 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 HB 6520.**

This bill provides critical economic justice for victims of domestic violence. Section one of this bill would expedite access to SNAP benefits for victims of domestic violence and provide temporary benefits for not less than ninety days before redetermining eligibility. Additionally, this proposal would prevent the income of their abuser from being considered as part of their eligibility determination. Section two would temporarily waive the Care 4 Kids income standard for victims of domestic violence for ninety days and also prioritize program eligibility for survivors. Lastly, section three would prevent an abuser's income from being considered for ninety days when a victim of domestic violence applies for cash assistance.

Financial abuse is commonly misunderstood but is one of the most powerful methods of keeping a victim trapped in an abusive relationship and diminishes their ability to stay safe after leaving. Research indicates that 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence and financial abuse occurs in 99% of abusive relationships. Financial abuse can include forbidding the victim to work or sabotaging work opportunities, not allowing the victim access to bank accounts and controlling how money is spent, refusing to pay child support, hiding assets or manipulating the divorce process. This is a major barrier for victims of domestic violence that may result in them deciding to stay in the relationship instead of having to face poverty.

Allowing victims of domestic violence quicker and easier access to SNAP, Care 4 Kids, and cash assistance temporarily will give them essential support while attempting to end an abusive relationship. Including the abuser's income does not provide an accurate picture of the victim's financial situation and may in fact serve to keep the victim dependent on the abuser if they are unable to access state benefits. Victims may be denied benefits because the abuser's income is too high. By not including the income of their abuser as part of their household income, survivors can apply for and start receiving benefits for themselves and their children while they are still in the home with their abuser. These are critical supports they will need when they do leave their abuser and become a single income household. Not having to wait until after they leave to start this process will have a significant positive impact on their ability to support themselves and their children independently.

We want to thank our partners at Women & Family Life Center in Guilford for working to bring this proposal before the General Assembly this year. HB 6520 will allow victims of domestic violence temporary services that will help minimize barriers to leaving an abusive relationship. We urge your support.

*(OVER)*

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

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