

Connecticut Commission on  
Women, Children *and* Seniors



Testimony of  
Christine Palm  
Commission on Women, Children and Seniors  
Submitted to the  
Judiciary Committee  
March 23, 2017

**Re: RAISED BILL 930: AAC THE RECEIPT OF ANNUAL REPORTS ON ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES; COMMITTEE BILL 726: AAC CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RESTITUTION FROM PERSONS COMMITTING CRIMINAL ACTS; RAISED BILL 1042: AAC THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR THE PROSECUTION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT; RAISED BILL 7299: AAC STRENGTHENING LAWS CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; RAISED BILL 7301: AAC EXPOSURE OF CHILDREN TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; and RAISED BILL 979: AAC NOTIFICATION TO SCHOOL AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF RESTRAINING ORDERS, CIVIL PROTECTION ORDERS AND STANDING CRIMINAL PROTECTIVE ORDERS AFFECTING STUDENTS.**

Senators Doyle and Kissel, Representative Tong, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors in reference to the above named bills pertaining to women's safety. It is my privilege to address six important bills today, which fall into three general categories: **the prevention of human trafficking; sexual assault; and domestic violence.**

The CWCS is strongly in favor of each of these six bills.

**Bills that address Human Trafficking:**

*In Connecticut in 2016, there were an estimated 151 children at risk for being trafficked, according to DCF (as reported by TIPC annual report).*

**RAISED BILL 930: AAC THE RECEIPT OF ANNUAL REPORTS ON ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES** would greatly enhance the coordination of information critical in the State's fight against the crime of human trafficking. The Trafficking in Persons Council (TIP) is rightly the clearinghouse of all matters concerning trafficking activity in our state. It convenes regular meetings of stakeholders, ranging from the hotel industry to law enforcement. Its work, carried out under the aegis of the CWCS and chaired by Jillian Gilchrest of CCADV, has resulted in at least two recent felony convictions for the crime of trafficking, has changed the way the State handles victims of trafficking (we now consider persons under the age of 18 victims of trafficking needing services, not criminals

deserving prosecution), and has greatly enhanced law enforcement's ability to prevent the crime. We support this bill because it would require various other State agencies to send their reports on trafficking activity to TIP, which is in the best position to collect and analyze data, and then coordinate and disseminate results and recommendations in its own annual report to the General Assembly.

**Bills that address Sexual Assault:**

*In Connecticut, it is estimated that one in four women will be the victim of a sexual assault in her lifetime, according to the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence.*

CWCS supports **BILL 726: AAC CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RESTITUTION FROM PERSONS COMMITTING CRIMINAL ACTS** because in addition to the enormous trauma sexual assault victims suffer, there is a financial toll in lost wages, medical services and counseling needed. We believe \$25,000 is still a low figure, but is a significant increase over the current \$15,000 limit.

As an aside, for clarity's sake, we suggest reversing the order of the clauses in Sec. (d) (1) as follows, so there is no inference drawn that the State is compensating dependents of sexual assault victims: "...in an amount in excess of fifteen thousand dollars except that compensation to, or for the benefit of, a sexual assault victim or to, or for the benefit of, the dependents of a homicide victim."

Regarding **RAISED BILL 1042: AAC THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR THE PROSECUTION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT:** this is another excellent bill that, if passed, will enhance the rights of victims of sexual assault, by doubling the statute of limitations for sexual assault from 5 to 10 years. Ideally, CWCS believes that there should be no statute of limitation for the prosecution of such an offense, but we support the increase from 5 to 10 as an excellent starting point.

**Bills that address Domestic Violence:**

*Domestic violence knows no economic, racial or geographic bounds. Last year, nearly 40,000 people sought help from CCADV for family violence.*

**RAISED BILL 7299: AAC STRENGTHENING LAWS CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:** We support this bill as a much more realistic definition of both the mechanics and the effects of stalking. First, by including, as the new language does, suffocation (including the obstruction of a victim's nose or mouth) the bill language reflects a common tactic used to incite fear and intimidation.

Also, the CWCS is very much in favor of adding "substantial emotional distress" to the stalking in the third degree criteria as outlined in Sec. 53a-181e, as it recognizes the legitimate trauma of being stalked.

**RAISED BILL 7301: AAC EXPOSURE OF CHILDREN TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:** Raised Bill 7301 intends to protect children from the horrendous trauma of seeing a parent victimized by a domestic partner. The bill seeks a 25% increase in the amount of time served for the crime, in recognition that a minor child who hears or sees family violence experiences a unique kind of anguish. We believe such enhanced penalties are more than justified.

**RAISED BILL 979: AAC NOTIFICATION TO SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF RESTRAINING ORDERS, CIVIL PROTECTION ORDERS AND STANDING CRIMINAL PROTECTIVE ORDERS AFFECTING STUDENTS:**

The CWCS supports **Raised Bill 979**, which would allow a person protected by a restraining order to request that the court provide a copy of the order to a school or place of higher education she or he attends. It is only logical that if a person protected by an order, who is vulnerable to violence by someone known to him/her, spends a significant part of each week on a campus, campus officials should be informed of the potential for violence or an altercation. Essentially, stalkers and domestic abusers often do not respect the boundaries of civil society, and can likely bring their ill intents to a campus setting, imperiling not only the intended target, but other students, faculty and staff as well. Giving campus police and other officials the knowledge to help guard against any kind of vengeful attack is a smart precautionary measure.