

Chris Murphy Announces Funding for Program to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence

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WATERBURY –Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) announced funding he secured for a nationwide judicial training program to improve domestic violence case management practices. Nearly 25% of women report having been assaulted or raped by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime. As a result, domestic violence cases are a large and rising portion of the caseload in state courts. However, many courts do not understand how their actions and timelines can affect victim and child safety.

"We need to give our courts every tool possible to handle domestic violence cases in a responsible manner. These cases are tough for everyone involved, but if we don't provide adequate training to our judges and court personnel, then victims can be put at greater risk. This training program funding will be critical to protecting victims of domestic violence and their families," said Murphy.

Waterbury is home to one of the four domestic violence court dockets in Connecticut. These cases are managed in a specialized manner that includes law enforcement, prosecutors, Family Services, probation officers, and domestic violence advocates in the case review process.

Murphy teamed up with Congressman Dave Reichert, a Republican from Washington State, to push the amendment to the Commerce-Justice-State Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations bill. Their amendment, which passed 405-25, adds \$5 million to fully fund the judicial training program that was included in the recently reauthorized Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The Court Improvement Program would train judges and other court personnel on how to properly identify and resolve the often complex issues involved in cases of domestic and sexual violence, as well as teen dating violence and stalking. The program was signed into law early last year as a part of VAWA but has not yet been funded.

The press event was held at Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury, which provides crisis intervention to any victim of domestic violence. Murphy was joined by the Executive Director of Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury, Peggy Panagrossi.

"We are thrilled that Congressman Murphy has co-sponsored this amendment with Congressman Reichert. Although Waterbury has a domestic violence docket, often we see offenders who are able to manipulate the system. This will train court staff and judges to hold batterers more accountable, which we think is very important," said Panagrossi.

The desperate need for trained judges and court personnel was brought into light tragically in the recent case of Yvette Cade. On the morning of October 10, 2005, Yvette Cade was doused with gasoline and set on fire by her estranged husband while at work in the suburbs of Washington, DC. She had had a protection order against him but a judge had dismissed her protection order three weeks before this incident. This judge had also likened victims of domestic violence to buses that come along all the time. Cade's husband was recently sent to prison for attempted murder.

This judicial training program may receive funding once the Senate passes their appropriations bills, the bills are reconciled in a conference, and the President signs the bill.

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