



The Honorable Thomas P. Caltagirone, Chair  
House Judiciary Committee  
106 Irvis Office Building  
PO Box 202127  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2127

August 12, 2008

**Re: House Bill 59 – Written Testimony of Pam Russell, Executive Director,  
Turning Point of Lehigh Valley, Inc. (Northampton and Lehigh Counties)**

Dear Chairman Caltagirone and Members of the Committee:

My name is Pam Russell, and I am the Executive Director of Turning Point of Lehigh Valley. For the past 30 years we have provided direct services for victims of domestic violence while educating the community about this travesty. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input about House Bill 59.

The passage of House Bill 59 is critical. Over the past several years we have seen severe funding cuts through state and federal sources. As a result, Turning Point's ability to meet the needs of the victims for whom we work has been radically restricted. Basics such as transportation assistance, child care for shelter residents seeking employment, and money for changing locks to help keep families safe instead of becoming homeless have all been lost. Victims are forced to wait for life-saving services such as shelter beds and counseling appointments. Salaries are so low that there are Turning Point staff members living in subsidized housing and receiving food stamps, taxing government services. As with all businesses, our costs continue to increase. Our funding has not increased. During this budget year, we were forced to eliminate a Child Advocate position due to a budget shortfall. Now the more than 750 children we serve each year will have to wait for help. Without the passage of House Bill 59 there will be more layoffs.

House Bill 59 will provide a stable source of funding, not subject to changes in governmental priorities. It will not have an impact on the general fund. What it will do is allow domestic violence programs across the commonwealth to address the needs of the victims seeking help. It will save lives.

Last year, Turning Point assisted more than 4,400 people. These are not nameless, faceless statistics. Each of these was someone's sister, daughter, friend, aunt, niece, coworker. If domestic violence hasn't touched your life, you are lucky and I hope it never does. But the families devastated by domestic violence do need your help.

I urge you to support House Bill 59, both within this Committee and on the floor.

Sincerely,

Pam Russell, Executive Director