

The Women's Center, Inc.  
Of  
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August 12, 2008

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

**Re: House Bill 59, August 12, 2008 Hearing, Written Testimony of Kathlene Russell, Executive Director, The Women's Center, Inc. of Columbia/Montour**

Dear Chairman Caltagirone:

**"If my Daddy didn't hit ... we could fish."**

This simple plea from a seven-year-old boy speaks volumes to the need to ensure that every community has effective domestic violence services available and that funding for those services is secure. Every little boy and every little girl in Pennsylvania deserves a happy, healthy, violence-free childhood. By funding programs that help families escape violent abuse, House Bill 59 will help that to happen. It is as simple as that. Please, support House Bill 59. Please, pass it before the 2008-09 session ends.

Last year, The Women's Center, Inc. of Columbia/Montour, provided life-saving services to over 1,000 victims and their families including over 400 children. We provided 18,000 hours of counseling. We conducted 900 free educational programs reaching 10,000 community members. We provided nearly 6,000 shelter days. Our attorney provided more than 200 victims and their children with free legal representation. And we did all of that on less money and faced with costs that continue to spiral out of control.

Federal and State funding for domestic violence services is less than it was 5 years ago. Costs are more... in some instances double... what they were 5 years ago.

5 years ago we had a full-time children's advocate. Today, a part-time employee struggles to meet the many and varied needs of children in shelter.

5 years ago we had a full-time volunteer advocate devoting all her time to developing and growing our team of volunteers. Today, a part-time

employee is barely able to manage our existing volunteers and has no time to recruit new volunteers.

5 years ago we had a medical advocate in all three local hospitals, immediately available for victims coming in through the Emergency Room, Pediatrics, The Maternity Ward and a host of other hospital departments. Today 1 full-time and 1 part-time employee race from hospital to hospital and victims wait.

5 years ago we had three full-time educators providing much needed prevention education programs in every single school district in our service area. Our educational arsenal included more than 30 curriculums on topics ranging from bullying and self-esteem building to dating violence, intervention strategies and workplace violence. Today we are down to two staff members and we have had to curtail all of our marketing efforts because we are unable to meet the demand for our programming.

Our services are a matter of life and death. We can never know exactly how many lives are saved each year because our services are there, but we do know that lives are saved. This past year a woman came to us with a huge portion of her scalp ripped away from her skull... her batterer had dragged her from room to room by her hair. We were able to get her to safety, get her the medical help she needed and, after surgery, we were able to get her free hair replacement. She is on the road to recovery and living free of violence. And she is just one of many.

Our services are a matter of life and death. We must do all we can to ensure that our services will be there for the next beaten and bloody victim that knocks on our shelter door. It is critical that we secure a source of funding that will be there no matter the political or economic climate. House Bill 59 can be that source. Please support House Bill 59. Enact it this fall.

**Make sure that we can take that little boy fishing.**

In Peace,



Kathlene S. Russell  
Executive Director