

The story I present to you today is mine, I am a domestic violence survivor.

My name is Bill Gibbons, a concerned and involved parent. I want to thank Representative Manderino and the committee for the invitation to our organization, Pennsylvania Families and Children's Equality, to comment on proposed House bills, 463, 1639, and 418.

I am so passionate about presumptive equal custody that I pedaled 310 miles in five days with my friend Bill Koellner. We pedaled from Philadelphia to Washington D.C., to promote Equal Parenting rights in the Commonwealth of PA and the nation. This event is patterned after a similar event by concerned parents in Lansing Michigan. They have been pedaling to D.C. for equal rights since 2006 now affectionately known as Parent Stock. This will be an annual event to promote equality between families and children. The details are at freedombiketrek4families.com.

It's important for my sons, Brady (age 5) and Charlie (age 4), for me to be their role model. I've earned 3 college degrees and 8 industry related certifications related to my 18 years of work in the Information Technology field. I take my education very seriously as it relates to my work and livelihood and that is something I want to pass on to my boys. I want to be a part of their lives, to encourage them, to mentor, to pass on my values and to be known as daddy.

MY STORY

During my marriage I endured physical abuse that included kicking, pulling my hair out of my scalp, teeth knocked loose, nose bloodied, personal effects trashed, eyeglasses broken, and while driving, punching me and throwing the gear shift into neutral with our son in the back seat. On my birthday in 2005, I woke up to find my wife standing by the bed with a knife close to my chest and she said: "I hate you so much I could kill you".

My friends and family witnessed the verbal abuse which was humiliating, degrading, and embarrassing. I had to give my dog to my mother for safe keeping as my wife tried to have him euthanized, the vet declined because he was still a puppy.

My wife alienated my friends, my mother, and my employer. I went from a valued employee with many commendations and awards, to probation with intent to dismiss.

Despite the physical differences between us I controlled my anger and never retaliated. I never filed a Protection from Abuse order against her for the same reason battered women often do not. I still loved my wife, I made a commitment to her before God, I vowed for better or worse, and meant it, and I thought if we worked at it the marriage could be saved.

I am here so you can meet me, a male survivor of Domestic Violence. Despite societal views –domestic violence is not limited to one gender, it victimizes both genders.

DATA IGNORED

Data on male domestic violence is routinely ignored. This results in laws being passed or currently in place that is out of date in today's society and harm our children by separating them from their parents.

Please refer to the two studies in the appendix included with my written testimony. Here you will find two very important studies of domestic violence against men and the resulting consequences.

One study in 1987 changed the entire culture of our country and unfortunately was not corrected until 1999 with the correct male response data.

HOW HB 463 and 1639 ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

I know some of you are still concerned about the effects of domestic violence when an order of joint physical custody is issued. I want to assure you we all share those same concerns and that is why I was so happy to see that HB 1639 addresses this most important of issues. If you will read section 5323, award of custody subsection (e), Safety Conditions, you will see that this bill orders the court to make sure that the safety of any abused party is included in any custody order by said court.

This issue is addressed again in section 5328 (a) (2), factor to be considered when awarding custody. Again it is stated that the safety of any abused

party must be safeguarded in any award of custody. ***Most importantly, this is listed as the second determining factor when custody is determined.***

Also importantly there are 28 specific offenses in section 5329 (a) that are to be considered before an award of custody.

I want Bill HB1639 passed for families and children's equality so children are no longer deprived of a close relationship with a loving caring parent. It will help end the exploitation of children often used as pawns in divorces. This legislation must be passed not for me, but for my children and all the children of divorce in this commonwealth who have no voice in a divorce. If we do not do this now, how does any parent answer the inevitable question from a child: "Where were you when I needed you?"

In closing, let me quote President Obama from his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.

"In today's wars, many more civilians are killed than soldiers, the seeds of future conflict are sewn, economies are wrecked, civil societies torn asunder, refugees amassed, and children scarred."

A custody dispute is often referred to as a custody battle. The only difference between a custody battle and one between nations is the absence of a winner in a custody battle. It's time to stop scarring our children, to give them equal access to both parents, and HB 1639 does this.

My name is Bill Gibbons, and again I thank the members of this subcommittee for the opportunity to testify.

Appendix

CLINICAL STUDIES

Study #1 from the Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science 1987, 1989 - 1999

A Canadian study published in the Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science in 1989 which was done in 1987 **simply ignored** data collected from men, this error was corrected by a subsequent study done in 1999 that used the same data collected in the 1987, that, in fact, shows that women in the previous study are in fact more violent than the men. This new and revised study reveals that:

- "Women are just as violent to their spouses as men, and they are almost three times more likely to initiate violence in a relationship, according to a new Canadian study, as reported in the National Post.
- Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this later study, however, is the source of the data — a 1987 survey of 705 Alberta men and women that reported how often males hit their spouses.
- Although men were asked the same questions as women in 1987, their answers were never published until now. When the original study was published in the Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science in 1989, it was taken as evidence of the epidemic of violence against women.
- It was cited extensively in a 1990 House of Commons committee report 'The War Against Women,' which ultimately led Brian Mulroney, the former prime minister, to call a two-year \$10-million national inquiry into violence against women, according to the National Post.
- The inquiry's 460-page report [in 1989] made 494 recommendations aimed at changing attitudes in governments, police departments, courts, hospitals and churches. It also led to a torrent of lurid news features about battered women."
- Canadian laws were influenced or enacted by a survey that was almost totally based on flawed and incomplete data.

When the data from male testimony was finally included in 1999, that report showed that:

- "Roughly that 10.8% of men in the survey pushed, grabbed or threw objects at their spouses in the previous year, while 2.5% committed more severe acts, such as choking, kicking or using a weapon.
- By contrast, 12.4% of women committed acts of minor violence and 4.7% committed severe violence.
- When questioned about who initiated the most severe conflicts, 67% of women believed they had started it; only 26% believed it was their male spouse."

My question is why is there still this universal belief that only men are violent?

Study #2 from the British Medical Association in 1998

The same bias is found in a 1998 British Medical Association (BMA) survey:

- "...in the town of Islington – they provided the information that 571 women and 429 men were asked about domestic violence. The result of questioning the 571 women shows that one in three of them had reported domestic violence, and a quarter of the women had been forced to have sex against their will.
- There is no mention in this report of any result from the questioning of the 429 men.
- Upon further research we find that the men were questioned, but only about whether or not they had physically or sexually abused women.
- The researchers failed to ask if they considered themselves victims of domestic violence."

Again I ask why was this data manipulated to show that only men are violent?

Why Does Domestic Abuse Against Men Go Unrecognized?

Domestic violence against men goes unrecognized for the following reasons:

- The incidence of domestic violence against men appears to be so low that it is hard to get reliable estimates. Is the reason for this that men are conditioned not to report domestic violence against themselves as opposed to women who are encouraged to report such claims.
- The idea that men could be victims of domestic abuse and violence is so unthinkable to most people that many men will not even attempt to report the situation. After all aren't all men bigger and stronger than all women? Aren't women the weaker sex?
- The counseling and psychological community have responded to domestic abuse and violence against women. Virtually nothing has been done to stop abuse against men, or to even acknowledge that it even exists. There has been very little investment in resources to address the issues of domestic abuse and violence against men.
 - We have VAWA – where is VAPA? Violence against People Act
- In most cases, the actual physical damage inflicted by women is so much greater than the actual physical harm inflicted by men.
- Even when men are a victim domestic abuse and violence, most people are so astonished, men usually end up feeling like nobody would believe them and fail to report the incident. .

The preceding data was provided by www.oregoncounseling.org