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REMARKS: 2/24/10

First, I would like to thank you for inviting me to speak today. My name is Jennifer Russell, and I am an Assistant District Attorney in the York County District Attorney's Office. I am in charge of the Special Case Unit.

In my time in the York County District Attorney's Office I have had the experience of prosecuting all kinds of crimes, ranging from DUIs, Thefts, Drug cases, rapes and child abuse. I have also had the opportunity to handle the prosecution of ICCs (violations of Protection From Abuse Orders). While I have prosecuted cases I have worked extensively with victims of abuse. Our office works to prepare victims for a successful prosecution. Our ultimate goal is to seek justice. In our efforts to seek justice it is paramount that we make every effort to help protect victims, and keep them safe. The worst thing that happens during the course of my interactions with victims is when they ask us for help keeping them safe, and my answer is right now there is nothing we can do for you.

In cases where an individual does not qualify for a PFA, or there is no "no contact provision" active in their case, that is often the answer that victims are given. There is nothing that we can do. I am talking about victims of sexual assault, rape. In the vast majority of the rape/sexual assault cases that our office prosecutes the victims would not qualify for a PFA. Until charges get filed there is nothing that prevents the perpetrator from having contact with the victim. In

addition, if charges get filed, and they result in a not guilty verdict, the victim loses the protection of “no contact” bail conditions.

This legislation would allow prosecutors and law enforcement to have the ability to reach out and help even more victims stay safe. It would allow us to say there is something that can be done for you. Peace Orders would work hand and hand with the PFA, but it would in no way take away from the use of Protection From Abuse Orders. Victims who currently fall under the protection of the Protection From Abuse statute would still seek the protection of a PFA. They would not be seeking Peace Orders. The Peace Order simply would allow people who currently have no way to seek the protection they need an opportunity to get it. The more tools that law enforcement, prosecutors, and the courts have to protect victims the better.

One of those tools would be the use of GPS. The bill proposed would allow, but not mandate, a judge to order an individual who has had a Peace Order or PFA to wear a GPS unit. The unit would notify a victim if the abuser had entered the boundaries of the victim’s protected zone. This would be a great tool to allow victims to feel safe in their own homes, places of business, etc.

There is no legislation in the world that would be able to 100% guarantee complete protection of victims in the future. But if this legislation can make one person feel safe and secure, keep one person from getting hurt, save one life...isn't it worth it. Of course it is. It is our duty to do everything in our power to keep victim's safe.

I am personally very excited about the prospect of these two very important pieces of legislation becoming law. I feel that any tools that we can utilize to help protect victims is important, and this legislation would be a great addition to our arsenal in our fight to seek justice for victims.