



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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Domestic Violence Leaders Sponsor Roundtable with Congressman Christopher Murphy

The Susan B. Anthony Project, along with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV), hosted U.S. Congressman Christopher Murphy and others on July 5th to discuss funding and services to assist victims of domestic violence. In addition to Congressman Murphy, Torrington Chief of Police, Michael Maniago, State Representative Mae Flexer, chair of the Speaker's Task Force on Domestic Violence, Task Force member Senator Andrew Roraback, domestic violence agency directors as well as victims participated in the roundtable event.

One of the main topics at hand was the necessity of continuing to adequately fund domestic violence programs. Connecticut's eighteen domestic violence agencies, which help more than 50,000 victims annually, provide services including counseling, safety planning and victim advocacy in court. Karen Jarmoc, Interim Director of the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, had met with Murphy and other representatives in Washington, D.C. in June. She emphasized the need for funding to continue these services, stating that last year, 93 percent of Connecticut's domestic violence programs reported an increase in the need for their programs. At the same time, however, they encountered a 73 percent decrease in funding.

Murphy affirmed that he will strive to maintain funding for domestic violence advocacy programs and to increase it when possible. Another critical measure is to pass the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which is up for reauthorization this year. VAWA, which Murphy called "a great piece of legislation," has dramatically increased victims' reporting of crimes and lowered the number of deaths due to domestic violence; it must be passed to ensure the safety of the funding it grants.



Congressman Murphy talks about the importance of domestic violence services.

Further discussion made clear that changes in state legislation are also needed. Several survivors gave firsthand accounts of violence committed against them by intimate partners. One woman who had been in an abusive relationship for twenty years said that after she left, her ex-husband utilized the civil court system as "the perfect venue" to gain access to her and her children. Because he filed false suits every few weeks, she was left broke by court fees as well as constantly forced to relive her trauma.



Jessica speaks to her years of abuse.

"very hopeful" that new measures can be taken to combat domestic violence in the upcoming legislative session. Over the summer she plans to look into model law enforcement policies, an issue presented during the discussion. She also noted that she would be examining Connecticut's high rate of dual arrest, to prevent victims from being arrested along with their abusive partners.

The domestic violence advocates also endorsed community education as a strong and meaningful preventive measure. Barbara Spiegel, Executive Director of the Susan B. Anthony Project, offered as an example how their agency works with pre-school children, teaching them about appropriate behavior to help quell future violent acts. Preventative efforts are "equally as important" as crisis services, Spiegel said, because "otherwise he numbers will not change."

State Representative Mae Flexer stated that she is



Rep. Flexer discusses upcoming plans for the Task Force.

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc. (CCADV), is a statewide 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that works to change social conditions through policy advocacy, public awareness, technical assistance and education. The current membership of the CCADV includes private, non-profit agencies providing services to victims of domestic violence which include but are not limited to safety planning, short-term counseling and support groups, information and referrals, advocacy, emergency shelter, children's programs and community education and training. To learn more about CCADV, please visit www.ctcadv.org.