

TESTIMONY OF

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Submitted to the: Task Force on Law Enforcement Response to Family Violence

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I am Jennifer Lopez, from Interval House, Connecticut's largest domestic violence intervention and prevention program and a member of the Greater Hartford Children and Domestic Violence Collaborative. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be heard today on such an important issue as the law enforcement response to family violence.

First, I want to say I truly appreciate the dedication and perseverance of our police departments. They have a tough and dangerous job. Their ability to respond quickly and appropriately saves lives.

However, while advocating for the past 23 years on behalf of many victims of domestic violence across the state with the need for advocacy after dealing with the police, I have come to realize that the biggest problem, which has led to dual arrest and the lack of proper enforcement of protective order is the disparity between police departments' policies and procedures.

The understanding of probable cause for example is different from officer to officer. Some officers feel that an allegation of abuse is enough to establish probable cause while others need to see physical bruises.

Enforcement of protective orders when it comes to jurisdiction is also a problem. Officers are not enforcing orders when the crime is committed outside of the victims' town of residence and are advising them to go to their towns. This causes confusion and frustration, which adds to the victims' fears.

Imagine someone who was just beaten calling the police and being arrested. Unfortunately, it happens too often and the consequences of a victim of domestic violence being afraid to call the police can be fatal and the lack of enforcement of court orders sends the message to batterers that they are free to do whatever they want .

There needs to be Standard Statewide Model Policies that will assist officers in assessing domestic violence calls that will lead to a proper response holding the real aggressor accountable and leaving the victims feeling safe and comfortable reaching out to the police if they are in need of assistance.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you.