NATASHA M. PIERRE, ESQ.
State Victim Advocate

Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
Monday, March 16, 2015

Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

House Bill No. 7004, *An Act Concerning Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force To Study Service of Restraining Orders*

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) was an active member of the Task Force To Study Service of Restraining Orders. In that post, the OVA worked diligently with other members of the Task Force to develop recommendations to improve the service of restraining orders in Connecticut. The OVA appreciates the Judiciary Committee's willingness to raise many of the recommendations of the Task Force.

House Bill No. 7004 will authorize state marshals to utilize the Protective Order Registry maintained by the Judicial Branch which will improve the timeliness of notification of successful service of process by state marshals. It will also require the State Marshal Commission to adopt regulations to ensure the consistent and reliable access to a state marshal for persons applying for a restraining order, the provision of services to persons with limited English proficiency, and to ensure that copies of the original service of process are clear and accurate. These measures will improve an applicant's access to services, the communications between the applicants and the state marshals and will increase the success rate for service of the restraining orders by the state marshals.

Currently, service of the ex parte orders and notice of the hearing is limited to state marshals who are required to serve the respondent be either in-hand or abode service. House Bill No. 7004 will authorize state or municipal police officers to provide verbal notice of an ex parte order and the hearing date to the respondent of the order not less than five days before the hearing. This proposal will serve to expand authority to police officers and the manner in which a respondent may be notified of the ex parte order and hearing. Additionally, House Bill No. 7004 will authorize an increase of a state marshal's mileage fee for in hand service, the preferred form of service, of the order and notice of hearing for up to three round trips or for

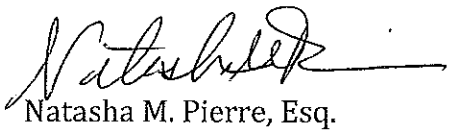
505 Hudson Street 5th Floor, Hartford, CT 06106 ▪ Phone: (860) 550-6632 ▪ Fax: (860) 560-7065 ▪ www.ct.gov/ova

any additional fees as authorized by the court for good cause shown. This measure will undoubtedly increase the success rate for service of these orders as state marshals currently are only compensated for one attempt of service despite the reality that it often takes more than one attempt to successfully serve the respondent.

Furthermore, House Bill No. 7004 will require that within each Superior court where restraining orders are issued, the Chief Court Administrator's office shall ensure sufficient office space to enable the restraining order applicant to meet with a state marshal concerning service of the order and notice of hearing. This measure will be extremely helpful to the applicants and state marshals particularly when the state marshals are provided incomplete or inadequate profiles which may hinder the successful service upon the respondents.

The Office of the Victim Advocate fully supports House Bill No. 7004 and urges the Committee's favorable report to improve Connecticut's policy and practice related to the service of restraining orders. I would, however, like to bring to the Committee's attention, *Senate Bill No. 650*, which will improve the application and service process of restraining orders and will increase access to domestic violence advocates. Together House Bill No. 7004 and *Senate Bill No. 650* will undoubtedly provide meaningful protections to victims of domestic violence, especially those victims who are trying to leave an abusive relationship. Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,



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