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Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
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Good afternoon 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. 7005, *An Act Concerning Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards and Increased Protections for Victims of Domestic Violence*

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) fully supports House Bill No. 7005 as it will require the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission (CJPAC) to formally establish a domestic violence offender program standards subcommittee to establish, and annually review and revise, statewide program standards for offenders who are arrested for committing an act of violence against a family or household member. Additionally, the proposal will require any domestic violence offender program to meet such statewide standards.

The OVA was an active participant of the Batterer Intervention Programming and Standards Subcommittee (BIP) of the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission (CJPAC). The BIP reviewed a nationwide survey of states that had developed and adopted program standards for batterer intervention programs. After a thorough review of standards across the nation, the BIP presented to the CJPAC a statewide model for adoption in Connecticut. Although the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch maintains standards for the current domestic violence offender programs (Family Violence Intervention Program, Explore Program and Evolve Program) through the RFP/contract process, many domestic violence offenders are referred to individual counseling, or other similar services unrelated to domestic violence offender intervention. The proposal moves Connecticut in the right direction for effectively combatting domestic violence across the state by demanding program standards of any entity involved in the operation of such programs.

Connecticut is among the few states in the nation that has not adopted statewide standards for domestic violence offender programming. The proposal will allow for a continued review of such standards to ensure that Connecticut is utilizing the best practices, especially as new programs are

developed specific to women offenders of domestic violence and same sex partners involved in domestic violence. Absent statewide standards in Connecticut, it is likely that there are domestic violence offenders avoiding responsibility for their behavior and placing victims of domestic violence at risk of further harm.

I strongly urge the Committee's favorable report of House Bill No. 7005. Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

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