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Letter of Opposition

I am writing to oppose House Bill 6286 and further help make Rhode Island safer for domestic violence victims. H6286 defeats the purpose of the law passed last year.

Last year, Rhode Island ensured that violations of restraining orders and no-contact orders be prosecuted by attorneys with specialized domestic violence training. Violations of restraining orders are a dangerous escalation of behavior and should be treated as such.

During my junior year of high school, I was a victim of domestic violence. My ex-boyfriend strangled and stalked me. Once a restraining order was filed, my ex-boyfriend violated it in the courthouse the day the permanent order was issued. A month later, he violated that order and the criminal no-contact order that resulted from the 1st restraining order. One violation, occurring in North Smithfield, was not taken seriously, the assaulter was only given a slap on the wrist, and no victim impact statement was taken. The violation handled by state police and the attorney general's office, was handled properly and taken seriously. As a result of this experience, I proposed a bill as my senior project sponsored by Representative Jacquelyn Baginski (H5702 and H7567A) and Senator Hanna M. Gallo (S358 and S2833A) which passed last year – its second year in existence. The purpose of the law was to ensure that domestic violence escalations are handled by an attorney who receives specialized training in domestic violence.

H6286 permanently allows law enforcement to continue to handle arraignments and plea deals at the initial hearings which subverts the law that was passed last year.

I oppose H6286 and urge the Committee to hold the bill for further study to protect the safety of domestic violence victims.

Madison Archambault