

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Hamzy: Judiciary Committee Okays Bill to Protect Family Violence Victims



'Jen's Law' would allow Videoconference Testimony from Spouses who Fear for Their Safety

A measure developed by state Representative William A. Hamzy, R-78th District, that would allow family violence victims who fear for their safety to offer court testimony via teleconference rather than being forced to appear in person was approved unanimously today by the General Assembly's Judiciary Committee.

The legislation (House Bill 5875) stemmed from the August 2007 murder of Jennifer Magnano of Terryville, who had fled the town on April 14, 2007 with her son and two daughters to escape an abusive relationship with her husband, Scott Magnano.

Forced by a court order to return to Connecticut to testify in person in her divorce and child custody battle with her husband, she was slain by Mr. Magnano in the front yard of their Terryville home at about 11 p.m. August 23, 2007.

The bill received strong support from Mrs. Magnano's family, in-laws and friends at a March 10th public hearing on the bill before the Judiciary Committee. Among those testifying were her daughter, Jessica Rosenbeck, 22, her son David Magnano, 16, and her sister-in-law Lisa Magnano.

"I'd like to thank my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee for giving this bill their unanimous support," said Representative Hamzy, who serves on the committee. "I am convinced that if this legislation had been on the books last August, Jennifer Magnano would be alive and caring for her young children today. There are many other women and children in our state in similar family violence situations who would benefit from the protection this bill would offer. It's my hope the full House and Senate follow the Judiciary Committee's lead and pass this important measure when they consider it later this year."

"Jennifer Magnano's family and friends hope that when this proposal is signed into law by Governor Rell that it will come to be known as Jen's Law," Representative Hamzy said. "It has the potential to save lives and protect battered women from being attacked on or near court houses by vindictive husbands or boyfriends. Women who are required to testify in divorce, child custody, or protective order proceedings should not have to risk being assaulted or killed on their way to or from court appearances."

“Jen’s Law could be a model for similar legislation in states throughout the country. When it is signed by Governor Rell, it will be a lasting memorial to a courageous woman who made the supreme sacrifice for the safety of her children,” Representative Hamzy said.

The bill is expected to go to the floor of the state House of Representatives within the next few weeks for further action.