



Administrative Office of the Courts

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Judicial Branch testimony neither for nor against LD 875, An Act To Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence:

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Julie Finn and I represent the Judicial Branch. Please accept the following testimony regarding LD 875.

This bill provides funding to domestic violence resource centers and the advocates who assist victims of domestic violence. As part of their duties, these advocates come to court on days when the court is handling protection from abuse (PFA) and protection from harassment (PFH) dockets. The assistance of the advocates makes court proceedings run more smoothly and efficiently. There are several reasons for that, outlined below:

- Advocates help the PFA/PFH dockets run more efficiently by assisting with communication between parties on the day of court to explore possible agreements and making a referral to an attorney for legal representation in court.
- Advocates can help a party complete court paperwork to initiate a case. Although advocates do not provide legal advice, they can explain which forms are needed and support. The time savings generated from advocates providing form assistance allows the court's clerical resources to be dedicated to other needs. Advocate assistance with forms can also ensure the forms are complete prior to filing, which reduces rejections by the court for incomplete filings.
- Advocates also help to explain what to expect in court and how to prepare. Court proceedings run more efficiently when the parties understand the purpose of the court proceeding and can come prepared.
- Advocates can make referrals to other services like housing, counseling, support groups, and mental health help. Access to needed services can help alleviate issues and allow a case to resolve more quickly.

Thank you for your support of this bill. The Judicial Branch greatly appreciates the assistance provided by domestic violence advocates in our courts.