

AMANDA FITZSIMMONS, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR

IN SUPPORT OF LD 692

APRIL 10, 2023

Good morning, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and public safety. My name is Amanda Fitzsimmons, I live in Franklin, and I am a domestic violence survivor. I am here today to testify in support of LD 692-An act regarding eligibility of county jail inmates for a community confinement monitoring program.

I was in a 20-year relationship that started when I was 15 years old. I suffered every type of abuse that only grew worse as the years went by.

Like most survivors, I left him but went back more than once. I knew what he was doing was wrong, but I stayed or went back to him out of fear of what he might do if I stayed away. He had me convinced that I would suffer worse or that my family would suffer if I left him permanently. The mind games that he played were unbelievably terrifying. He would tell me I was his and no one else would ever have me. He threatened not only my life, but our childrens, my parents and even my grandmother.

Each time that I was brave enough to leave, he would do anything to contact me to cry and beg for forgiveness. Making false promises just to make me feel weak and sorry for him. When I'd go back, the abuse grew more than the time before.

The first PFA was in 2014. I was free for just over 2 months. He began talking to our son and convinced him that he had gone to rehab, was sober, going to therapy and was working on being a better man for his family. He begged our son for all of us to come home and be a family again. He broke that PFA more than once. He called me from an unknown number that I answered not knowing it was him. He knew that all it would take to get me back was to talk to me. He cried and begged me for one more chance to prove his love for me. He knows how important family is to me and always used that to his advantage. Finally, I agreed to at least go to his house to talk. That talk only made me weaker to his lies. Less than 24 hours later, I was in court asking to drop the PFA. To my surprise, that PFA was easier to drop than it was to get it a few months prior.

Things were ok for a few weeks until I suspected him of using drugs again. The fights and threats quickly flared up, only worse than ever. By June of that year (2015) I discovered that he

was an IV addict. I begged him to get help and quit. He refused and threatened my life daily if I left him again. By the end of that summer, our oldest 2 kids moved in with my parents to escape the daily abuse. Our youngest who was 10 at the time, refused to leave my side because "daddy won't hurt you as badly if I'm here mommy" with her little innocent voice saying those words to me, I had to do something and be smart about it! For months, I planned my way out, knowing that if I didn't set up a safety plan, one day he would kill me and most likely in front of her.

December 4th 2015, was the closest he got to taking my life along with our kids and my mom. By the grace of God, I was able to finally out smart him, staying 3 steps ahead of him, but not before being held hostage for hours at knifepoint, seeing the fear in my kids' eyes as he screamed at them saying he was going to kill us all, enduring the worst abuse yet. I was able to sneak away once he fell asleep. Which was not an easy task as he had blocked the doors and screwed the windows shut. I ran to my neighbors house and she drove me to a family members house. That's when I heard all the sirens going towards his house. My safety plan was in place, and it was actually working. I should have felt relief at that moment, but all I felt was extreme fear he was going to get to me somehow.

He went to jail and was held without bail until that Monday. His lawyer fought to get him bail using me and my lack of credibility against me because I have left and returned more than once so I must not be that scared. My lawyer knew how important it was for the safety of me and my children for him to stay in jail. He had 5 felony DV charges. The court sentenced him to only a year after facing up to 25 years. He only served 11 months.

Had he been released; I know he would have contacted me and gotten into my head again to convince me he was sorry and would never do it again. Those 11 months gave me time to heal and learn how manipulative and abusive he was. I was finally able to stay away from him! I am proud to say that 12/4/2015 was the very last time I have suffered abuse!

Thank you all for listening to a tiny piece of my story. It's truly an honor to be here today standing up for all DV survivors!