

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Myers, and distinguished members of the joint standing committee on Health and Human services. My name is Sare Collman. I live in Madison and am here testifying in support of LD875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence.

It's been almost 10 years since I escaped my violent and very dangerous abuser. Some days I feel like it was just yesterday that I was able to escape and other days it feels like a lifetime ago. The night terrors have finally started to lessen and aren't as frequent. Unfortunately, the TBI (traumatic brain injury), the seizures, and shattered L4 and L5 vertebrae have not wavered in these 10 years into giving me any comfort whatsoever. My memory is bad, the headaches are unbearable, and standing on my own two feet for any length of time hurts so bad I want to curl up in the fetal position hoping I get some comfort at some point before I need to stand again. Work is not possible for me. My long-term injuries are so bad that it's impossible to hold a steady job. I either can't be on my feet that long or I have a seizure on the job and I'm let go anyway.

The day I 'escaped' (as I like to call it) I had been held against my will for 3 days and beaten over and over and over consistently for those 3 days. I was strangled on three different occasions to the point of passing out. I was punched, slapped, kicked, and had my tongue ring ripped out as he shoved his fist literally down my throat. I was humiliated and finally thrown into dressers (which broke) and slammed through a table. I truly believe the only reason I lived that day was because for a brief second, "he" snapped out of the rage persona he was in and realized he had heard my back shatter. It sounded like the breaking of one's knuckles when your joints are sore and you want relief. He panicked immediately and just started hitting himself in the face, laughing this horrid evil laugh as he reached for the phone to call 911 to report an assault. Yes, you heard that right! I was the abuser he informed them, regardless of the fact my house was completely destroyed from broken tables, blood everywhere, doors off the hinges, broken glass and my face looking like someone's bloody, bruised punching bag. I was the one arrested!

Now looking back I could care less that I was the one arrested over him cause it's what saved my life! I was first taken to the ER for x-rays, CT scans, MRIs, etc., all while handcuffed to a bed because as these police officers were told by the narcissistic, manipulative person I had just escaped, I was the abuser. After 8 hours in the ER I was taken to jail (that's a story for another time) and charged with DV assault. It wasn't until 3 weeks later that he was arrested and charged with what he had done. I thank God every single day that the situation finally ended how it did because I do not believe wholeheartedly that I would be here speaking in front of you today. My abuser received 7 years all suspended but 30 months and 4 years of probation. He was to wear an ankle

monitor for the first two years after he was released. After his release I believe he only had it on maybe 5 months before he broke it off. That was what introduced me to the Family Violence Project. My son and I had to immediately leave the trailer we lived in, the place we called home, and go stay in a shelter; an unfamiliar, scary place especially for a 10-year-old boy but we did okay considering. We were there for 4 months in total, and I don't have enough time or paper to tell you every little amazing thing that happened to us in that time. The advocates were my saviors. They helped me with everything I could need or want. I got back into college, got a nice home for my kids and I got sober and have been since the day before I stepped foot into that shelter on February 12th, 2018. I got my license back after not having it or caring to get it back for 7 years. I gained full custody of my boys and every single thing I mentioned was all done with the help from Family Violence Project.

Today I live a way different life. I am a newly appointed board member of Family Violence Project and I am beyond honored to have been and to continue to be part of this wonderful cause. I take my life very seriously now and I try to help as many others who are in DV situations just as I was helped by my advocates. This funding is so crucial. I'm grateful every second of every day to be alive because honestly, I do not know where I would be or the condition I would be in if this organization didn't exist; not here standing before you today, that I am sure of. Thank you for your time