

Testimony in Support of LD 875

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Shirley Holt, I live in York County, and I am testifying in support of LD 875, An Act to Fund Essential Services for Victims of Domestic Violence.

I am writing this testimony on the 12th anniversary of my sister Barbara's murder. She was shot in the head twice by her estranged husband, David. My nephew was asleep in the bedroom across the hall when his mother was shot. Shortly after noon on March 12, 2013 he woke up after working late the night before waiting tables at a nearby Italian restaurant. He was surprised to see his mother's car in the driveway because she had moved out a few days earlier, when David had threatened to put a bullet in her head.

My nephew left his room to talk with his mother and found coffee seeping under the door to her bedroom. He walked in to find Barbara, dead, in a pool of her own blood, and David trying to stand up after shooting himself in the head in a failed attempt at suicide. He walked, barefoot, through her blood, knowing she was dead, but compelled to check anyway.

The cost of Barbara's murder was far more than just her life. For two years I sat in my recliner, barely able to function. I didn't work. I didn't laugh. I did almost nothing to care for myself or my home. My business failed. My marriage barely survived. My younger nephew has frequent panic attacks. My older nephew, like me, struggles to keep a job.

We found David's do not resuscitate order in his papers a few days after doctors performed extensive brain surgery to save his life. He lived three years in a nursing home, missing the front of his brain, unable to speak, and with cloth bags over his hands so he wouldn't hurt himself.

The emotional toll on family and friends defies my ability to convey to anyone who hasn't experienced this kind of loss. There is also a financial cost beyond our collective inability to function. The direct cost of Domestic Violence comes in the form of emergency room visits, surgeries, nursing homes, prisons, and mental health care. Additionally, there is significant lost tax revenue when family and friends are unable to function sufficiently to work. It seems to me that the moral imperative to protect the vulnerable members of our communities, coupled with the financial costs when we fail, justifies state funding of organizations that are on the front lines of providing protection and support.