

**PREVENTING TEEN VIOLENCE: STRATEGIES FOR
PROTECTING TEENS FROM DATING VIOLENCE
AND BULLYING**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND TERRORISM
OF THE
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PREVENTING TEEN VIOLENCE: STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTING TEENS FROM DATING VI- OLENCE AND BULLYING

FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 2011

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND TERRORISM,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:40 p.m., William E. Tolman Senior High School, 150 Exchange Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Hon. Sheldon Whitehouse, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senator Whitehouse.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND, CHAIRMAN OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

Senator WHITEHOUSE. I want to thank you, Principal Silva.
[Applause.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. And I want to thank the administration and the teachers and the students of Tolman High for having us here this afternoon.

We have some significant guests who are with us and I wanted to recognize them. I believe that Attorney General Kilmartin will be coming, but in the meantime, the Department of Attorney General is represented here by the Deputy Attorney General, my former deputy when I was attorney general, Jerry Coyne. So please welcome Jerry.

[Applause.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. We have Senator Bea Lanzi, who is the sponsor of the Lindsay Ann Burke Act, which passed in Rhode Island and which we will hear more about during the testimony. She is also a member of the State Cyber-Bullying Task Force that is run by Senator John Tassoni.

Representative Eileen Naughton will be joining us. She is the House sponsor of the Lindsay Ann Burke Act. She is currently working with our State Department of Health on children and teen issues, including dating violence.

Representative Grace Diaz is here, as well. And if you could give a hand for our legislative leaders who are here with us.

[Applause.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. I am told that the mayor will be here, but he is not here at the moment. In the meantime, he is represented by our new police chief here in Pawtucket, Paul King.

Chief King, thank you very much for being here.

[Applause.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. And from the school side of things, we have my friend, Ray Spooner, the Chairman of the Pawtucket School Committee, and, of course, your principal, Fred Silva.

[Applause.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. So this afternoon's field hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism, which I am the Chairman of, considers a topic that is extremely important to Rhode Island families—preventing teen violence, strategies for protecting teens from dating violence and from bullying.

For the students in the audience, a hearing, a Senate hearing like this is a formal opportunity for Congress to learn more about an issue. The testimony of our witnesses today becomes part of our Nation's official legislative record and it provides valuable guidance to Congress as we work on our Nation's laws.

Today's hearing is an important step towards learning how to better protect our Nation's teens from violence.

Our setting provides a very appropriate forum for studying and learning about effective tools to reduce dating violence and bullying.

These are extremely important topics. According to the Center for Disease Control, one in 10 teens reports being hit or physically hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend at least once in the past year.

Teen violence can take other forms, as well. Each year, one in every four adolescents reports verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse from a dating partner.

As we will hear from our witnesses and as many in the audience know, these are not mere statistics. Every victim is someone's child or sibling, someone's friend or classmate.

There is a close relationship between dating violence and bullying. Those who bully their classmates in elementary and middle school may be more likely to become violent when they enter relationships. What can seem to be simple bullying or name-calling early in a relationship can escalate to more serious violence, including assault.

New technologies, such as smart phones and social networking sites, also have created new avenues for dating violence and bullying. Abusive messages posted on a Website can quickly reach a broad audience and be difficult to get rid of.

Rhode Island has been at the forefront of efforts to prevent and respond to teen dating violence. Through the hard work of organizations, including the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Lindsay Ann Burke Foundation, the Katie Brown Educational Program, and the Safe Start Program at the Sojourner House, as well as the close cooperation of law enforcement officers, teachers, parents and community members, Rhode Islanders have led the Nation in developing innovative programs to promote strong and safe relationships. And Rhode Island's Lindsay Ann

Burke Act has become a model to other states in addressing teen violence.

We are joined today by a talented and accomplished group of leaders from our State who will share their experience and wisdom on this important topic.

I believe this afternoon's hearing will be particularly important as Congress turns to reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act later this year. That law has done so much to protect victims of violence in Rhode Island and across the country. We will also be, I hope, taking up a new education bill in the Health Committee, which may provide, also, a vehicle for considering legislation in this area.

I look forward to working with my Republican and Democratic colleagues to make sure that Rhode Island's voice is heard as Congress works to protect families and prevent teen violence.

I see that Mayor Grebien has arrived. You were recognized earlier before you got here, Don, and the kids all cheered for Paul King in your stead. But perhaps if you would stand up, they would give you a cheer, as well.

[Applause.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. So, now, one of the things that we do in hearings in Congress is we have the witness sworn. You have all seen the photographs of witnesses before Congress with their hands up being sworn in. And so we will do that here, as well. And I will ask the witnesses to stand and raise your right hand.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Please be seated. We have some wonderful witnesses here and I will introduce each of them as they give their testimony, and then we will save the end for questions and general discussion.

Ann Burke is a registered nurse, with a master's degree in health education, and a recently retired health teacher who taught middle school students in Rhode Island for 25 years.

After the 2005 murder of her daughter, Lindsay, a victim of dating violence, she founded the Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund, whose mission is to support the prevention of dating and domestic violence through education.

In 2009, we welcomed Ms. Burke to Washington to testify before the full Senate Judiciary Committee at a hearing on the continued importance of the Violence Against Women Act, and it is a great privilege to hear from her today.

Ms. Burke, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF ANN BURKE, PRESIDENT, LINDSAY ANN BURKE MEMORIAL FUND, NORTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

Ms. BURKE. Chairman Whitehouse, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on why Congress needs to prioritize teen dating violence prevention in the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

I speak to you today as a mother, an advocate, and retired teacher. It has been almost 6 years since my daughter, Lindsay, was brutally tortured and murdered by her ex-boyfriend. We cannot change the past, but we can help shape and determine the future.

And so I am proud that we have created a positive legacy in honor of Lindsay.

In 2007, Rhode Island became the first state to pass a comprehensive teen dating violence law. Now, at least 14 states have followed the example of the Lindsay Ann Burke Act and passed laws to support education on teen dating violence.

Many times, states pass laws after other parents experience my same nightmare. I know many of these parents from across our Nation. We have a parent e-mail support group, a group no one wants to belong to. And today, I speak for them, as well as myself.

Not only do we live with the tremendous loss of our daughters and sons, but we have all been traumatized by this horrendous manner in which many of our children were tortured and murdered. Suffice it to say that the details of dating violence murders are beyond any sense of decency and morality.

In Rhode Island, the attention given to this subject has made a difference. Since the passage of the Lindsay Ann Burke Act, physical teen dating violence rates have decreased from 14 percent in 2007 to 10 percent in 2009. Just as importantly, the law created awareness on the severity of the issue among school personnel. Now, teachers are more receptive to teaching the topic of healthy relationships in health class.

Beyond the statistics, I'd like to share some real life success stories. One of my former students wrote me a two-page letter about the abusive relationship she found herself in. The last paragraph reads: "So I wrote this letter because I'll always wonder how long my initial relationship with that boy would have lasted if I hadn't had your voice in my head warning me to get out quickly. I think that if you had never taught me all of the warning signs of an abusive relationship, I would have strived to be a better girlfriend and I would have let him control me, because I wouldn't have known any better. I had never had a real boyfriend before. So how would I know the difference? Anything could have happened last year. Thank you for teaching me those lessons."

Another health teacher received a letter from a former student, who wrote: "Last year in health class we learned about healthy relationships. I listened. I'm glad I did, because over the summer, I realized that my boyfriend was starting to become abusive. He would call me 30 times a day, leaving me voice mails of him screaming at the top of his lungs.

One day I couldn't hang out and he punched a wall and threatened to do the same to me. If I hadn't taken your health class, I would definitely still be with him.

So thank you for teaching us about relationships. It really does matter. People don't think it happens in our school. It does."

And yet another health teacher told me that after he finished teaching his unit on dating violence, one student walked up to him after class, pulled up her shirt sleeve, exposing several bruises, and said, "This is what my boyfriend did to me."

There is no silver bullet, single message, intervention or campaign that has been demonstrated to prevent teen dating violence. Success will require a comprehensive approach. But on a positive note, we know that prevention works.

Prevention research tells us we need to support education programs starting in middle school that do not simply talk about the warning signs of dating abuse, but initiate conversations about healthy relationships. We need to educate and engage those who influence teens, including parents, teachers, coaches, older youth and others.

We need to meet youth where they are in person, but just as importantly, online through social marketing campaigns and tools, and policies need to be adopted to support this programming.

Why is teen dating violence prevention an issue for the Violence Against Women Act and this committee? Last year, as a country, we spent more than \$400 million for the Department of Justice VAWA programs to combat the serious crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. We need to invest in preventing teen dating violence to stop these adult crimes.

As a mother, I can still remember the deep pain in my heart 5 years ago when I first learned that dating violence is a preventable health problem.

My hope is that the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act continues to support and expand services for teen victims, but also include the focus on the prevention and early intervention of teen dating violence.

By involving the whole community, we will recognize that teen violence is a real and serious issue that can be prevented.

And I'd like to share with you, Senator, an e-mail I received just yesterday which I think is most appropriate in supporting our prevention efforts.

It reads: "Mrs. Burke, on behalf of the West Warwick Public School Department, as well as personally, I want to thank you and commend you for your continued work in the battle against teen dating violence.

Unfortunately, we find ourselves talking to our students much more about this than we would like to. However, the work you've done and the resources you provide have been powerful in sending the message to our students about what dating violence is, that it's not OK, and how to get help.

We have many success stories of students getting out of destructive relationships, and I can honestly say your work played an integral part. Thank you again. Karen Tarasevich, Principal, West Warwick High School."

[Applause.]

[The prepared testimony of Ms. Burke appears as a submission for the record.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Ann.

It is really extraordinary what you have accomplished. You took the worst nightmare that every parent dreads more than anything else and you turned the terrible energy of that into such a powerful force for good. And as we have said already, the leadership that you have shown is now being echoed around the country in many, many other states and we look forward to working with you on this.

But I just wanted to add a particular word of how immensely proud I am of what you have accomplished out of this tragedy.

Ms. BURKE. Thank you, Senator. I appreciate that.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Our next witness is Deborah DeBare, who I have worked with for many, many years as the executive director of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Previously, Ms. DeBare served for 5 years as the executive director of the Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County, and she was the policy and information associate for the Rhode Island Division of Mental Health and Community Services.

She received her master's degree from the Heller School at Brandeis University and a BA from Brown University. And it is a pleasure to have her testimony today.

Please, Deb, proceed.

**STATEMENT OF DEBORAH DEBARE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
RHODE ISLAND COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,
WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND**

Ms. DEBARE. Thank you. Chairman Whitehouse, thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss the prevalence of dating violence and domestic abuse with you today.

Recognizing the extent of the problem is the first step in preventing future abuse. The Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a statewide association of six member agencies and a task force of survivors, SOAR, dedicated to ending domestic violence in our state.

As executive director of the coalition, I'm here today to discuss the extent of domestic violence and dating violence, its impact on children and youth, and the critical importance of primary prevention programming.

In the United States, the crisis of domestic violence has reached epidemic proportions. Families from all income brackets, educational levels, and racial and ethnic origins feel its effects. On average, more than three women a day are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the United States, and women experience over two million injuries from intimate partner violence every year.

Rhode Island is no exception to the national norm. In 2010, Rhode Island's six domestic violence agencies provided a comprehensive array of services to over 10,400 victims of domestic violence and responded to over 15,000 crisis calls.

The impact of domestic violence on children who witness abuse has only recently been recognized. Growing up in a violent home can affect every aspect of a child's life, growth and development, and lead to higher risks of repeating the cycle of abuse.

In spite of this, we know that when properly identified and addressed, the effects of domestic violence on children can be greatly mitigated.

Teen dating violence is also more prevalent in the United States than people realize. Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a figure which far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth.

In Rhode Island, an estimated 11 percent of high school students stay that they have been hit, slapped, or otherwise hurt physically by a girlfriend or boyfriend on purpose. Ten percent of Rhode Island high school students say that they have been forced to have sex when they did not want to, compared to 8 percent nationally.

The domestic violence movement has spent the past 30 years building up its defensive line, you could say, in the struggle to end violence against women. We have scored a lot of points and won a lot of games through the passage of the Violence Against Women Act, mandatory arrest laws, and the development of safe homes and support services.

But in order to win that championship game, we need to build our offensive line, as well. We need to engage communities in primary prevention.

Rhode Island has been a leader in the prevention of domestic violence and dating violence, as we have put resources into working to change public attitudes about the issue for over 10 years.

Our very first public awareness campaign focused on bystanders, urging people to change their attitude about domestic violence, to stop thinking about it as a private matter. Since then, we've been fortunate to have been one of the first 14 states funded through the Centers for Disease Control, through the DELTA program, to develop a statewide prevention plan for domestic violence.

The Violence Against Women Act has unquestionably improved the national response to domestic and sexual violence. Since VAWA passed in 1994, states have passed more than 660 laws to combat domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. However, in addition to saving and rebuilding lives, VAWA has actually saved taxpayers \$14.8 million in net averted social costs in the first 6 years alone.

VAWA was not only the right thing to do, it has also proven to be fiscally sound legislation. Due to the overwhelming success of VAWA-funded programs, more and more victims are coming forward for help each year. However, this driving demand for services without a concurrent increase in funding means that many desperate victims are turned away from live-saving services. In just 1 day, there were over 9,000 requests for service unable to be met by domestic violence agencies around the country.

The Violence Against Women Act is working, but the job is not done. Although VAWA has done much to create systems that help victims and survivors, much more is needed. We must strengthen VAWA so that it can work for all victims of domestic and sexual violence. Whether they live in rural or urban areas, whether they are children or elderly victims, whether they speak English or another language, every victim deserves a chance to live a peace-filled life.

Congress has a unique opportunity to make a difference in the lives of so many by reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act in 2011 with key and (inaudible) improvements.

Thank you, Senator Whitehouse, for all you have done, for your leadership, and for all I know you will continue to do to help victims of domestic and dating violence. And, again, thank you very much for the opportunity to share some comments with you.

[Applause.]

[The prepared testimony of Ms. DeBare appears as a submission for the record.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Deb. And thank you for your many years of dedicated work in this area.

Our next witness is Kate Reilly. Kate directs Start Strong Rhode Island, a program based at the Sojourner House in Providence, which aims to curb the epidemic of teen dating and digital abuse.

At Start Strong, Ms. Reilly is leading the development of a videogame and a social networking site that will help teens learn about the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Ms. Reilly has a master's degree in epidemiology from the Boston University School of Public Health and a bachelor's degree from New College of Florida.

We welcome her for her testimony. Please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF KATE REILLY, DIRECTOR, START STRONG,
SOJOURNER HOUSE, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND**

Ms. REILLY. Thank you, Chairman Whitehouse, for the invitation to testify on a program aimed at preventing teen dating violence. It is Start Strong, building healthy teen relationships.

I direct that program, and it's a partnership led by Sojourner House, one of six domestic violence member agencies of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence. We partner with Young Voices to develop and implement innovative approaches to prevent teen dating violence.

Six months ago, Start Strong Rhode Island invited young people to share their relationships, in 140 characters or less, on our interactive Website, called hookupwithrespect.com. We thought that we might get a few dozen entries from kids, but by the end of the month, we had hundreds of stories from kids all over the country like these: "I go out with an amazing guy. He cheated on me twice. I can't break up with him. Every time I get angry, he yells at me and calls me insane. Signed, I love him," 14-years-old, Providence.

This one: "I was in an abusive relationship and I left. Now, he's begging me to come back. He's buying me all the good things and doing sweet stuff. I don't want to go back, but I do miss him. Signed, Annie W.," 16-years-old, Providence.

The stories submitted to our site, in addition to the dozens of interviews and conversations with hundreds of students in classrooms, shows that young people in Rhode Island know what's unhealthy and they see these negative (inaudible) and they want to talk about the issues.

But these stories show that young people everywhere need to learn how to build healthy relationships. When young people learn and embrace healthy relationship skills, they can prevent teen dating violence and future adult domestic violence or sexual violence, as well as bullying, unintended teen pregnancy, and alcohol and substance abuse.

So how do we make that happen? How can Congress partner with advocates and educators to create ways to help young people build healthy relationships?

What do we know about what works? Well, first, we need Congressional support for comprehensive programs. We need products that bring our message of non-violence into places that youth are living and playing, school, home, after school, sports fields, and, also, in the connected world of smart phones and Facebook.

Start Strong Rhode Island brings comprehensive and engaging prevention strategies to our school and community through a few

key strategies. We're using the Fourth R, an evidence-based healthy relationships curriculum and have reached over 600 7th- and 8th-graders since October 2009.

The social and emotional learning curriculum integrates interactive storytelling, multimedia, and performance. But we're also reaching out to parents with a program called Passport to Social Media, which helps parents prevent abuse in a digital world, so that they can work at home to keep their kids safe.

Second, we need Congressional—we need Congress to recognize the importance of authentic youth-adult partnerships in this work. That means that we need to involve groups like Young Voices who work with young people and teach them how to understand laws so that they can advocate for policy change.

Finally, we need Congressional support for this conversation being on the social Web, Facebook, Twitter, and, also, videogames. At Start Strong Rhode Island, we're investing a significant amount of money in the social media tools, because we know that social and electronic media are no longer a pastime. A recent poll from the Pew Center of American Life shows that half of teens send 50 or more text messages a day. That's 1,500 texts a month.

In another study from the Pew Center, 90 percent of teenagers classify themselves as gamers. That's also why we are going to, in October of 2011, release a videogame that will be the first immersive video game to support the teaching and learning of positive, protective relationship-building.

We're leveraging the power of gaming to create an engaging virtual teen dating violence prevention curriculum that kids will be able to access anytime, anywhere they have access to the Internet.

Yes, we need to be aware of the risks of these technologies, such as cyber-bullying and sexting, but we need to utilize them as opportunities. Social media and mobile technologies can be used to promote prevention and responsible bystander behavior.

Any effort to stop teen dating violence must help youth learn to use these technologies responsibly and help them—and use them to disseminate prevention methods.

Each of the 11 Start Strong communities across the country have innovative strategies for schools to change policies, use social media, and reach parents and older influencers to be a part of this prevention work.

I urge you to look at these models by going to startstrongteens.org.

In closing, to reach and engage youth, it's not enough to teach prevention in the classroom. Advocates, parents and youth leaders need to meet kids where they are and help them achieve healthy relationships on and offline.

[The prepared testimony of Ms. Reilly appears as a submission for the record.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you very much, Kate.

[Applause.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you for your leadership in bringing this message (inaudible). It is critically important.

Our final witness is Ruth Zakarin. Ruth is the executive director of the Katie Brown Educational Program, a relationship violence

prevention program serving Rhode Island and southern Massachusetts.

Previously, Ms. Zakarin managed a program and provided services for victims of domestic violence and their children in a variety of settings, including hospitals, shelters, and community-based programs.

She holds a master's degree in social work from the University of Pennsylvania.

Thank you very much for your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF RUTH ZAKARIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
KATIE BROWN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS**

Ms. ZAKARIN. First, I want to thank Chairman Whitehouse for hosting this hearing, and all of you for being in attendance.

I am privileged to provide information about our program as a way of highlighting the importance and role of educational programs in preventing and eventually ending teen date violence.

The Katie Brown Educational Program is a relationship violence prevention program. We work with students from 6th grade through high school, teaching information they need to be healthy and safe in all of their relationships.

Since our inception in 2001, we have reached over 47,000 individuals with our program. Our curriculum addresses a range of topics, including conflict resolution, managing anger without violence, recognizing the signs of an abusive relationship, standing up for your own rights, while also respecting the rights of others.

We also teach about the different kinds of violence found in a relationship—physical, emotional, verbal, financial, and sexual violence. It is our belief that proactive education is at the core of preventing violence.

This education cannot wait until high school when students are already involved in dating relationships and have formed many of their attitudes about how relationships should work. It is never too early to start teaching young people about how to have a healthy relationship.

This kind of education provided early and often is extremely effective in reducing relationship violence. This belief has been reinforced by a 2007 study from the CDC on the effectiveness of universal school-based programs on the prevention of violence and reckless behavior.

This report included bullying and dating violence prevention programs that met certain criteria, and found that for every \$1 spent on prevention, over \$3 were saved in health care and criminal justice costs per youth.

At the Katie Brown Educational Program, we see the impact of such programming every time we enter a classroom to teach. All of the students who receive our curriculum complete three important tests. These three important tests measure changes in beliefs and attitudes about violence in relationships from bullying and healthy friendships in younger grades to dating violence in older grades.

For example, in the 2009–2010 school year, 92 percent of participating 5th-graders believed in the following statement—I feel like

I can now stick up for myself without hurting anyone—at the completion of our program. Ninety-four percent of 7th-graders identified at least one part of their own behavior that they need to change to be more respectful in their relationships.

Ninety-one percent of 8th-graders said they were willing to change their stereotypical ideas to be more tolerant and accepting of others. And 93 percent of high school students stated that they were more aware of the warning signs of an unhealthy or abusive relationship.

These responses show us that when we talk to young people about violence in relationships, they listen. It is imperative that we give youth the opportunity to explore their own attitudes and beliefs about relationships. We have to teach young people what it means to be respectful to peers and, eventually, to dating partners.

We must work with you to change social norms and create a culture where violence is not tolerated and where abusing a partner or peer is simply not acceptable.

On April 4, 2011, Vice President Joe Biden spoke at the University of New Hampshire about the responsibility of colleges and universities to prevent sexual violence on campus. In his remarks, Vice President Biden spoke passionately about not just responding to victims, but working to prevent such violence so that there are no more victims.

I would like to end with something the Vice President shared during his speech. Really, changing attitudes is what we need to do the most. Folks, if we are going to end violence, not reduce, but end it, we are going to have to change attitudes. That is the core of the problem.

Again, I would like to thank Chairman Whitehouse for working in partnership with us to ensure that the necessary support and resources are available for the prevention of teen date violence.

[The prepared testimony of Ruth Zakarin appears as a submission for the record.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Senator WHITEHOUSE. So let me ask each of you, first, for some recommendations. We in Congress will be, I hope soon, reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act in the Judiciary Committee. I hope we will also be taking up fairly soon the new education bill in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

Obviously, the education-related bill would have to be fairly school-based in order to stay within the jurisdiction of that committee. But between the two of them, the VAWA jurisdiction and the ESEA jurisdiction, it should cover this area pretty broadly.

What are the key program additions that each of you would recommend?

And let me add that the record of this hearing will stay open for a week after the conclusion of the hearing and anything additional that you or anyone else may wish to file will be added to the record of the hearing.

So you do not have to give me a perfect and complete answer right now, because later on I want a more comprehensive answer than time permits. (Inaudible.)

Let me hear your thoughts on what you think are the most important areas we should be sure to invest our (inaudible).

Ms. BURKE. On the ESEA, I believe what we will submit are language changes and there will be (inaudible) school programs, to include language for teen dating violence, preventing teen dating violence. And there is no doubt that funding from that department can specifically apply to teen dating violence programs, as well.

Second, with VAWA, we are recommending—and we will definitely put our written proposal in the—include it in the record for you—but we support what the Obama Administration is doing as far as having an umbrella over all the programs that are now in there, like the Aging Men program, the step program which offers some funding for school-based programs, creating policy.

We do support a comprehensive approach, but we very specifically recommend the emphasis on prevention. Prevention must be included in that. Right now, there is no funding for prevention included.

We just need the resources to work on prevention. Community agencies are part of that solution. They need resources to work with the schools on prevention so that we can have a comprehensive approach.

We can't ignore the relationship between the community resources, the schools, the parents, the coaches. It's going to take everyone. It takes a village to raise a child. It's going to take a village to solve this problem.

So the emphasis primarily on prevention within that comprehensive package in VAWA.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. And, Deb, what would you recommend?

Ms. DEBARE. I could go on for another half-hour about this because the Violence Against Women Act is so lengthy and comprehensive. But for the record here, what I would like to say is, in particular, in Title 3, which is the services and prevention for younger victims of violence elements, those are the sections we are going to be submitting in writing, the areas that we would like to see some additional language to ensure that prevention are eligible activities and that the focus can be in prevention. The Keeping Our Campuses Safe Act, for example, right now, those grant programs fund services and intervention. We want to make sure that prevention activities can be included there. And we want to make sure that all the prevention and protection programs are working, as Ann said, in a consolidated way and not duplicating efforts.

Now, I would be remiss, also, if I didn't mention Title 1 of the Violence Against Women Act, because the judicial and law enforcement tools, while they are most traditionally thought of as intervention strategies, are hand-in-hand, part-and-parcel with prevention.

It has been proven that strong prosecutions results can deter and prevent future situations of domestic violence from occurring. So we have a number of recommendations that would strengthen Title 1, with the judicial and law enforcement tools, as well.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Kate, what would be your first recommendations to us?

Ms. REILLY. I would join Ann and Deb in supporting the consolidation of the VAWA violence prevention programs. I also am very

much in support of comprehensive programs, and I think that we have a particular opportunity to expand comprehensive prevention in VAWA.

I think that it's important to make sure that prevention programs leverage social networking, digital communication, and gaming are included and encouraged in those RFPs. And I would also encourage to include—to be as comprehensive as you possibly can in the ESEA language, and, in addition to the very important piece of classroom education, also include prevention activities that reach out to parents from the school, and engage the school in reaching those parents.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. And, Ruth.

Ms. ZAKARIN. I certainly want to echo all the words of my colleagues and, also, add a piece about curricular standards so that schools are given some guidance about expectations for the inclusion of prevention curricula throughout the students' engagement in school.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Where would you suggest those be developed or approved?

Ms. ZAKARIN. I think that there is room for them in either VAWA or in school-based legislation. And I also would recommend that that legislation include language not just about what we want to prevent, but, also, what we want to encourage so that there is very clear and strong language about teaching the young people the skills they need to have healthy relationships; so not just what they shouldn't be doing in relationships, but what a healthy relationship should look like.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Tell me when you think we should start focusing on this issue in terms of the ages of the kids who begin to get involved. I have been very involved in middle school legislation.

President Obama, when he was in the Senate, had a bill that he supported called Success in the Middle. That has now become my legislation in the Health Committee, and that could provide a vehicle. And I just wanted to hear from you on whether that is too soon, not soon enough, about right in terms of when we need to engage with kids on this issue.

Ms. DEBARE. I don't think it's ever too soon to start discussing and working with children and youth at this. For example, even in working with preschool children who are experiencing and witnessing domestic violence in their home, early intervention with children at that age can dramatically reduce the risk of repeat cycles of abuse.

And so I think it's misleading to think that if we just start in middle school to address the problem, that we will have taken care of it. There are definitely different interventions and strategies for working with developmentally aged children, but there are programs that are out there that are geared toward elementary school children, working on conflict resolution and starting to build those resiliency skills for children who already are at risk.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Before they get into a relationship, the skills are laid down.

Ms. DEBARE. Absolutely.

Ms. ZAKARIN. I would also add that I know that we are talking about this in terms of teen dating violence, but if we look at teen dating violence as one component of relationship violence as a whole and we look at that as a continuum, I think it becomes clear that we can start talking to children about what it means to have a healthy relationship and prevent violence in their peer relationships, their relationships with others, and, eventually, in dating relationships, and that can start very early on.

So I would agree with Deb that it's never too early to talk to a child about what it means to have a healthy relationship and what the definition of respect is.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Tell me a little bit more about the problem of children who witness violence. We worked on this together, Deb, when I was attorney general. What are the latest findings on this?

Ms. DEBARE. Well, as the years have gone on, there's more research out which, unfortunately, shows that there are significant behavioral and emotional factors that are impacted in children when they witness domestic violence in the home.

We used to think that witnessing domestic violence meant that the children were present in the room when the violence occurred, but we've seen an impact shown when children are in the household. They may be in a different room and hear the abuse going on and the impact is as heightened for them as if they were in the same room.

And so we need to look at the family as a whole unit in that sense and realize that it's not just the two parties that are in the assaultive situation that are impacted.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. And what is the effect that has been shown to take place with children who are witnesses to domestic violence, whether immediately or several rooms away, just hearing it?

Ms. DEBARE. Statistically, girls who witness domestic violence are at higher risk for growing up to experience dating violence or domestic violence as adults. Boys are at a higher risk for repeating the patterns of the abusive behavior. And both boys and girls are at risk of having emotional problems, behavioral problems in school, suicide ideation, psychological issues that present, mental health issues.

So there's a whole host of problems that have not even be identified as having been caused or triggered by witnessing domestic abuse. However, as I said earlier, with early intervention, these effects can dramatically be mitigated.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Kate, tell me a little bit more about the way in which the new social media technologies both enable abusive and bullying behavior and, also, enable communication that can help address those concerns.

How prevalent is it, for instance, for you to see that the experience of violence or bullying that is brought to your attention has a connection to social networking sites and communications across social networks?

Ms. REILLY. We definitely need more research about cyber-bullying and digital abuse. But to give you an idea, when I go into a classroom of 30 kids and we start talking about digital abuse, sexting, constant text messaging, digital disrespect, there are few

kids in the classroom who don't have a personal story to tell about that.

There are some dynamics of connected culture that make bullying more dangerous and more prevalent. No. 1, it's sharing. So before, you would have a message or maybe a fight between two people, that would have been just contained to that relationship. Now, that's something that can spread to hundreds, even thousands of people in less than a second.

You also have the audience effect. Conflicts can arise exponentially when you have hundreds or thousands of people looking in on it. And, third, you have what we call the invisible wall.

Sometimes people get a dose of cyber confidence because they can't see who they're talking to, and people say and do things to each other that they would never do in real life.

So those three dynamics take normal bullying, the same routes, in real life and just enhances it and makes it more pervasive.

What I love about the social Web, though, in terms of doing the organizing and prevention work is that it allows you to pull everybody's stories about a topic and share that. So a lot of what we do at Hookup With Respect and with our video game is actually creating the tools that allow people to tell their own stories. And so we can bring the voices of thousands of kids together at once.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. I am warned that the bell is going to ring in about a minute and that that will create a certain amount of turmoil as the bell rings and people come and go.

So what I think I will do is just briefly adjourn the hearing to allow that disruption to proceed, and then we will come back into session briefly. And although it is not in order for members of the audience to ask questions at a Subcommittee hearing, I do not think that there is anything that prevents me from listening to the questions and relating them to the panel.

So I may take a question or two from the audience and pass it on to the two of you to help engage the discussion, and then we will conclude the hearing after that.

So we will be adjourned for a few minutes until the bell has rung.

[Whereupon, at 2:30 p.m., the hearing was recessed and resumed back on the record at 2:42 p.m.]

AFTER RECESS

Senator WHITEHOUSE. The hearing will return to order. And what I think I will do is see if there is a question or two in the audience that I can relate to the panel so that we have a little bit of audience participation here. And I also wanted to give Ruth a chance to tell a little bit the story of Katie Brown and how the Katie Brown Education Project came into being, because it has made a really significant difference, but, unfortunately, it started in sorrow, as well.

If you could explain the background.

Ms. ZAKARIN. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do so.

Our program is named after a young woman named Katie Brown. She was a 20-year-old woman from Barrington, and she was murdered in January of 2001 by her dating partner. And in the aftermath of her death, friends of the Browns came together with a domestic violence direct service provider in Fall River to

start a conversation about what could be done to prevent the same fate from happening to any other young person. And from there our program was born.

And at its origins, we started sending folks into area schools to talk—start talking to young people about healthy relationships, and our curriculum developed from there and we now, as I mentioned before, have a curriculum for 5th grade through high school and we teach in schools throughout southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

And our staff is now at its largest with four educators who are in area schools pretty much every week of the school year, again, with the idea that we want to give young people the skills and information that they need to recognize and prevent violence so that there are no more victims.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. I want to give a few other people a voice in this hearing, as well, because I hear from Rhode Islanders through letters and e-mail all the time on a wide variety of topics and a number of them have written letters to me about bullying, and I just want to share a few of those thoughts.

One comes from a parent—these are from parents—in East Providence. A child at her son's school had committed suicide due to bullying and her son came to her to try to understand what had happened. And she and her husband talked to her son, but she was still anxious and concerned and she really didn't have a good answer.

So she wrote to me this: "When will this bullying come to an end? What is it that we have to do to get the point across that this is not acceptable and it will not be tolerated? It breaks my heart as a parent to know that a life is now gone, children are heartsick, and, God forbid, the reality of it all is that it could be your own child, and now I send my child off to school pondering and hoping that this never happens to my child."

Another parent wrote: "My son is"—the first was from Jennifer in East Providence, Rhode Island. This is Beth writing in from Wakefield, Rhode Island. "My son is in the 7th grade. He is athletic and no outward appearances make him look like a target for bullying. Yet, he is harassed daily. His grades have gone from good to failing. He cannot even concentrate. He has been assaulted and he can't hit them back or he will be suspended. Something needs to be done. Our children are not safe in school."

And the last one I will read is from J. in Bristol County. She said her daughter was being bullied because of the way she dressed. A group of girls constantly were on her to the point her school work failed and she feared going to school. The problem ultimately escalated to physical violence.

She wrote: "One day my daughter was beaten by one of the girls and I was called to the police station. The offending child was suspended briefly, but the girl's friends continue to taunt my daughter with name-calling and threats."

Eventually, she home-schooled her daughter and the daughter is now successfully in college.

But I wanted to put into the record of this hearing the extent to which I think this touches all of our lives, and I hear so often from parents about this.

Now, before we wrap up the hearing, I did say I would give people a chance. So if anybody has a question they would like to ask, I will happily repeat it to the panel.

Yes, sir? Good afternoon.

Question from the Audience. [Off microphone.] My son was a victim of gang violence. [Off microphone.] Despite all the damage done to his head and his face, it was over \$10,000, they all walked. So this young lady was talking about stronger prosecutions.

We need people in the attorney general's office—because I know Sheldon was big on doing—he did a lot to stop it.

Well, the violence that is happening to these young people, the courts are allowing it, our attorney generals are allowing it. And it isn't just Rhode Island. It is happening across the country.

So we need stronger prosecutions. [Off microphone] talking to the state police about the situation, one of the things I said to him, because they were involved in some of the internal affairs aspects, I said to him, I said, "You've got to love the people and you've got to start—we've got to start prosecuting the criminals."

I do thank you for your time, and have a great day.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you. I think we all heard the question. Would anybody care to respond?

Ms. BURKE. I think I would just like to say that having been thrust into the judicial system several years ago, what I very quickly learned was that victims have far few many rights and criminals have far too many rights.

I don't know specifically which laws need to be changed or amended, but I do think we need stronger laws. I do understand, though, being an educator, that with youth crime, you would like to think that we should give those offending youth a chance to rehabilitate themselves, to change.

I was just talking with Deb, in fact, in terms of dating violence. I've heard from several superintendents and principals asking the question: So if we have an episode of dating violence on school grounds, according to our policy, we can discipline the abusive partner, but what do we do to re-educate them, to help to turn them around?

And as an educator—and this is very difficult for me, with a daughter that's been murdered. It's hard for me to look at it from the viewpoint of the abusive partner. But I do—I try to be as objective as possible and I do believe in my heart that when you're talking about a youthful offender, that we have to, as a society, give them a chance to rehabilitate themselves, hopefully through some sort of an educational program.

However, I do believe that each of them have to be held accountable for their actions. So I think that the re-education and the rehabilitation has to be on top of the discipline or being held accountable according to the law.

I don't know the specifics of your case, but I do believe that far too often, we're a little bit too soft with criminals, regretfully.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Let me ask an additional question. Violence within a relationship often has different motivations and different triggers than violence in other circumstances.

Are there programs that are particularly effective at dealing with the offenders and giving them the chance to rehabilitate them-

selves and to learn how to avoid traveling that path again that are particularly effective in the relationship violence context?

Ms. DEBARE. Well, to answer that, what I would say is that domestic violence and dating violence situations are primarily crimes driven by motivation of power and control. And so as learned behaviors, there are psychosocial programs that have been developed over the past 15–20 years in a group setting that are, at this point, the most effective that research has seen.

Now, I'm not going to sit here and say that they are effective or a cure, but there is some research that is encouraging that for individuals who are motivated, that the behaviors can change.

For the most part, though, to recognize that domestic and dating violence is societally learned behavior—and so that as a society, if we can change those norms and, in that way, hold our own selves accountable, we have a much greater likelihood of reducing domestic and dating violence.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. And how long is the pull of childhood exposure to violence in adult behavior? You said that it was statistically significant, but how significant?

Ms. DEBARE. Children who are exposed to domestic violence are often six times more likely than children who are not exposed to domestic violence to have symptoms or behavior problems or repeat the cycle.

So while that is a high risk factor, it is not a direct causal factor, and that's where the research is quite—there's a large continuum about how large of a risk factor that really is.

Early interventions, as I said before, have been proven to take that risk factor and dramatically cut it down. So just because someone grows up in a home where there is abuse going on does not mean that they are automatically going to grow up to be abusive.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. And let me ask one more question about the relationship. We have two topics today. One is bullying and cyber-bullying, and the other is relationship violence, domestic violence.

What is the connection between the two? How would you describe it?

Ms. ZAKARIN. Well, I think there is a strong connection and it's part of the reason why I use and our program uses the words "relationship violence," because that encompasses violence in a peer relationship or bullying, cyber violence, dating violence. And what has been found is that there are so many similarities between the violence that happens among peers; also, very often, about power and control, having a lot of the same effects on health and well being, on academic success, as dating violence.

So there is a tremendous amount of overlap, which is why I think it's good to get away from putting dating violence and bullying in different silos and seeing them as a continuum of behaviors that all relate to relationship violence.

And I will probably sound like a broken record, but the more that we can do to teach kids about what a healthy relationship looks like, wherever, at school, at home, with a dating partner, the more we will see a reduction in such issues.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. And that would be equally true whether the bullying was simply verbal versus physical. It connects nonetheless.

Ms. ZAKARIN. Sure. And what we try to do is to help children understand that violence is more than just a physical assault. Traditional schoolyard bullying, fighting is very different now and sometimes children do not realize that sitting in front of the computer screen and posting something and hitting "enter" is a form of violence, and that using your words to hurt someone or cause fear in someone is a form of violence; or destroying someone's property, even if you're not hurting them physically, is a form of violence.

So in these conversations, it's important that we give young people a broader definition of what violence is and, also, hold young people responsible for their own behavior so that they're not perpetrating violence against others.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Very good. Yes? Please, Ann.

Ms. BURKE. And as much as I agree wholeheartedly 100 percent with what Ruth just said, that we need to take that comprehensive approach and especially starting early and there is the overlap, most of the similarity has to do with the power and control in the relationship.

I think, though, that whatever we do to address the bullying situation, we cannot and must not let dating violence get lost in the shuffle, because there are some differences as it progresses.

Abusers of dating violence usually have a problem with one person and one person only, and that's their romantic partner, and, generally, much of that abuse takes place in private. Oftentimes, we don't know who the abusers are. And that's why when you see episodes of domestic violence in the news, people will oftentimes say, "I can't believe it. He seemed like such a nice person." You wouldn't guess that that person was being abusive to their romantic partner.

In stark contrast to that, when we look at bullying, especially amongst young people, bullying is an overt behavior. In school, everybody knows who the bullies are and victims know that they're being victimized.

They may not most often feel secure enough and faith enough to come forward and tell, but they do know that they're being victimized. When we look at dating violence, most victims of dating violence are not aware that they're victims of dating violence. They're not aware that they're being abused.

So there are those differences and those are very significant differences. So whatever we do educationally for bullying, some of it in the early stages does certainly apply to dating violence, but as we enter the middle school years, we've got to address those issues both. We can't have them so enmeshed that dating violence gets lost, because then we'll end up back in the situation where we have victims not learning warning signs, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Good. Well, you all have just done wonderful work. And I want to assure you that as we go forward in Washington on these issues, that we will be in close touch with you. It is part of my job to bring the experience and wisdom of Rhode Island down to Washington and try to improve things there through

the wisdom and experience that Rhode Islanders can bring to so many different issues.

But on this one, I think, Rhode Island really has an enormous amount to be proud of. And even though a great deal of this leadership had its inception in tragedy, it is, nonetheless, inspiring for that, indeed, it is wonderfully inspiring because of that.

And so I thank you very much and I look forward to working with you as we go forward. I just want to close with an expression of my very great pride in what you have done in Rhode Island and what you continue to do in Rhode Island every day.

So without further ado, if there is anything that anybody wants to add, the hearing will be open for an additional week and they can send anything they would like in to my office and we will add it into the record of these proceedings, and the record of these proceedings will become part of the official legislative record of the Congress of the United States.

So thank you very much for participating, and the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:58 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

[Submissions for the record follow.]

SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD

Testimony of Ann Burke, R.N., M.Ed.

President and Founder, Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund, and

Co-Founder, Love is Not Abuse Coalition

June 3, 2011

Field Hearing of U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism

Chairman Whitehouse, thank you for the opportunity to testify at this Congressional field hearing today on the need to prioritize teen dating violence prevention. At the end of my written testimony, I have responded to your question for specific suggestions regarding the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as it pertains to preventing teen dating violence. I thank you for your leadership on this issue, and hope to continue to serve as an advocate on this topic for you and this Committee.

Today, I speak as a mother, an advocate, and retired teacher. It has been almost six years since my daughter, Lindsay, a 23 year-old aspiring teacher, was brutally tortured and murdered by her ex-boyfriend. We cannot change the past, but we can help shape and determine the future. And so, I am proud that we have created a positive legacy in honor of Lindsay. In 2007, Rhode Island became the first state to pass a teen dating violence law; now, at least 14 states have followed the example of the Lindsay Ann Burke Act and passed laws to support education on teen dating violence. Many times, the states passed laws after other parents experienced my same nightmare.

I know many of these parents from across our nation. We have a parent email support group; a group no one wants to belong to. And today, I speak for them as well as myself. Not only do we live with the tremendous loss of our daughters and sons, but we have all been traumatized by the horrendous, horrific manner in which many of our children were tortured and murdered. Suffice it to say that the details of dating violence murders are beyond any sense of decency and morality.

Impact of Dating Violence

The impact of this issue is widespread and the risk factors start early. In Deborah DeBare's testimony, she clearly articulated the scope and prevalence of the problem, including the negative health links including smoking, using drugs, engaging in unhealthy diet behaviors, risky sexual behaviors, and attempting or considering suicide. As we discuss the health impacts, we should recognize the links of violence to coercion and unintended pregnancy, and support interventions focused on this behavior. Girls who are victims of dating violence are four to six times more likely than non-abused girls to become pregnant.^{1 2} One in three adolescents tested for sexually transmitted infections and HIV have experienced domestic violence.³ One explanation may be due to "*sexual and reproductive coercion*," which is defined as coercive behavior that interferes with a person's ability to control his/her reproductive life. Girls who have been abused by a boyfriend are five times as likely to be forced into not using a condom and eight times more likely to be pressured to become pregnant. Futures Without Violence, formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund, has focused attention on this part of the puzzle with researchers at University of California Davis and Harvard School of Public Health. Through an NIH-funded pilot study, they found assessment for

¹ Silverman JG, Raj A, Clements K. Dating violence and associated sexual risk and pregnancy among adolescent girls in the United States. *Pediatrics* 2004;114(2):e220-5.

² Silverman JG, Raj A, Mucci LA, Hathaway JE. Dating violence against adolescent girls and associated substance use, unhealthy weight control, sexual risk behavior, pregnancy, and suicidality. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2001;286(5):572-9.

³ Decker and, MR, Silverman, JG Raj, A; 2005 *Pediatrics*: Vol. 116 No. 2 August 2005, pp. e272-e276

reproductive coercion and counseling in health settings has demonstrated positive outcomes. Assessment for reproductive coercion during family planning clinic visits was associated with a 70 percent reduction in pregnancy coercion,⁴ and young women in family planning clinics who received both assessment and counseling on harm reduction strategies were 60 percent more likely to end a relationship because it felt unhealthy or unsafe.⁵

An additional impact of teen dating violence is its affect on academic achievement. As Education Secretary Arne Duncan said at a recent Gender-Based Violence Summit, "youth cannot learn if they feel unsafe." In fact, an analysis by the Department of Education found that students who experienced physical and/or sexual violence had lower grades; approximately 20 percent of these students had mostly D's/F's and only five to six percent had mostly A's.⁶

Witnessing violence has also been associated with decreased school attendance and academic performance, and teen dating violence victimization. Women who are exposed to their parents' domestic violence as adolescents are significantly more likely to become victims of dating violence than daughters of nonviolent parents.⁷ Attached to my testimony, I am including a report prepared by the Library of Congress that includes a more thorough review of the impact of this problem.

Chairman, you titled this hearing as "Strategies for Protecting Teens from Dating Violence and Bullying." The timing is appropriate as a study published this week in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* found that boys who are bullies at school are at increased risk of abusing their partner later in life -- a link that the researchers say could hold potential for curbing domestic violence, which we know affects about a fourth of all U.S. women. Carrying out frequent bullying as a child was linked to a four-fold increase in a man's risk for partner abuse, a stronger association than other factors such as being abused as a child. As Dr. Jay Silverman with the Harvard School of Public Health, the lead researcher, said: "The take home message is that bullying should be an important consideration when we're thinking about reducing gender-based violence in adults. We really need to look at bullying also through that lens."

Victims of dating violence come from all walks of life, crossing lines of race, socio-economics, and education. Anyone can be a victim and anyone can be an abuser. And that's precisely why I feel so strongly, both as a parent and a teacher that all students, no matter where they reside or their background, deserve to be educated about this topic in order to protect themselves and others. In Rhode Island, the attention given to this subject has made a difference.

Impact of Lindsay Ann Burke Act

Since the passage of the Lindsay Ann Burke Act, physical teen dating violence rates have decreased from 14 percent in 2007 to 10 percent in 2009.⁸ Just as importantly, the law created awareness on the severity of the issue among school personnel. Now, teachers are more receptive to teaching the topic of healthy relationships in health class. Before the law, it was unclear where and whether this subject should be addressed.

⁴ Miller E, Decker M, McCauley H, Tancredi D, Levenson R, Waldman J, Schoenwald P, Silverman J.A Family Planning Clinic Partner Violence Intervention To Reduce Risk Associated with Reproductive Coercion. *Contraception* - 01 September 2010 (10.1016/j.contraception.2010.07.013).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ United States, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009

⁷ Noland, VJ, Liller, KD, McDermott, RJ, Coulter, ML, and Seraphine, A E. 2004. Is Adolescent Sibling Violence a Precursor to College Dating Violence? *American Journal of Health and Behavior*. 28: 813-823

⁸ United States, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009

The Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund has worked to address dating violence primarily through educating teachers, parents, and students. The stigma of hiding abuse is being lifted. The lack of awareness of abusive behaviors is ending. Beyond the statistics, I'd like to share some real-life success stories. When speaking with student groups, invariably one or two students will disclose that they are in or have been in an abusive relationship. Since teaching the topic of dating violence in my own classroom, I have heard from several former students who told me how their education helped them and their friends to identify their relationships as abusive and get out of those relationships safely.

One of my former students wrote me a two page letter about the abusive relationship she found herself in. The last paragraph reads "So I wrote this letter because I'll always wonder how long my initial relationship with that boy would have lasted if I hadn't had your voice in my head warning me to get out quickly. I think that if you had never taught me all of the warning signs of an abusive relationship, I would have strived to be a better girlfriend and I would have let him control me because I wouldn't have known better. I'd never had a real boyfriend before, so how would I know the difference? Anything could have happened last year. Thank you for teaching me those lessons. Keep doing what you're doing. You are truly making a difference."

Another health teacher received a letter from a former student who wrote "Last year in health class we learned about healthy relationships...I listened...I'm glad I did because over the summer I realized that my boyfriend was starting to become abusive. He would call me 30 times a day, leaving me voicemails of him screaming at the top of his lungs. One day I couldn't hang out and he punched a wall, and threatened to do the same to me. If I hadn't taken your health class, I would definitely still be with him. So thank you for teaching us about relationships. It really does matter. People don't think it happens in our school, it does."

Another health teacher told me that after he finished teaching his unit on dating violence one student walked up to him after class, pulled up the sleeve of her shirt exposing several bruises, and said "This is what my boyfriend did to me."

And lastly, to support the fact that prevention works, I'd like to share an email that I received on June 2, 2011. It reads "Mrs. Burke, On behalf of the West Warwick Public School Department, as well as personally, I want to thank you and commend you for your continued work in the battle against Teen Dating Violence. Unfortunately, we find ourselves talking to our students much more than we would like to. However, the work you have done and the resources you provide have been powerful in sending the message to our students about what teen dating violence is, that it is not okay, and how to get help. We have many success stories of students getting out of destructive relationships and I can honestly say your work played an integral part. Thank you again, Karen Tarasevich, Principal West Warwick High School."

Importance of Prevention

As we have learned, it is not enough to ask teachers to add on a brief, one-time lesson or hold one assembly on dating violence. To truly prevent another tragedy like Lindsay, we need to start early and meet youth at every point of their day on an ongoing, consistent basis -- in school, after-school, in the community, and in the home.

There is no silver bullet, single message, intervention, or campaign that has been demonstrated to prevent teen dating violence. Success will require a comprehensive approach. But on a positive note, we know that prevention works. We have solid evidence that school-based teen dating violence prevention programs have been effective in changing behaviors.

Prevention research tells us we need to support education programs starting in middle school that do not simply educate youth about the warning signs of dating abuse but help initiate conversations about healthy relationships. This is part of the continuum of abuse that starts early as seen with other behaviors, such as bullying. We need to educate and engage those who influence teens including parents, teachers, coaches, older youth, and others. Many times these leaders do not know the critical role they play in young people's lives and the power they have to promote healthy relationships and steer teens away from unhealthy ones. We need to meet youth where they are – in person but just as importantly online through social marketing campaigns and tools. And, policies need to be adopted to support this programming.

The Lindsay Ann Burke Act required schools to adopt a teen dating violence policy. The implementation varies, but some schools in Rhode Island have adopted a strong prevention and intervention school policy. I worked with Futures Without Violence and others to draft a national model middle school policy. This policy, based largely on the model policy developed by the Rhode Island Department of Education, is being advanced in communities across the country. There are a few core elements including school-wide prevention education, training programs for school personnel, parent engagement, innovative intervention strategies to respond to abuse, and partnerships with community agencies to help victims of abuse. School policies are critical to support the programming.

Why is teen dating violence prevention an issue for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and this committee? Last year, as a country, we spent more than \$400 million through the Department of Justice VAWA programs to combat the serious crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. This funding is necessary to provide life-saving services for victims and their families, but we know these crimes can be prevented through primary prevention efforts. One strategy is to invest in preventing teen dating violence by focusing on the middle school years along with strategies to address children exposed to violence in the home or community.

A recent report released by the World Health Organization said: "there is currently only one strategy for the prevention of domestic violence that can be classified effective at preventing actual violence. This is the use of school-based programs to prevent violence within dating relationships."

Summary

As a mother, I can still remember the deep pain in my heart five years ago, when I first learned that dating violence is a preventable health problem. My hope is that the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act continues to support and expand services for teen victims but also includes a focus on prevention and early intervention to address teen dating violence.

In response to Chairman Whitehouse's question asking for our specific recommendations to the VAWA reauthorization bill and ESEA reauthorization bill, I have compiled these thoughts.

Recommendations for VAWA Reauthorization

For nearly two years, I have shared the lessons we have learned in Rhode Island with national policymakers to inform the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, set to expire this year. In June 2009, I was honored to testify before the full Senate Judiciary Committee on this issue. This opportunity convinced me that the federal government has a role in stopping this violence, just as states such as Rhode Island have recognized it is a public health and safety concern.

With the understanding that VAWA will expire this year, I participated in a working group to review current youth and prevention programs to see if they will adequately prevent teen dating violence. Through many calls and meetings, the working group – made up of advocates from around the

country and co-chaired by Futures Without Violence and Break the Cycle -- decided to advocate for maintaining the programs that have been funded but include an increased focus on prevention, particularly the prevention of dating violence, one of the identified shortfalls of the previous VAWA.

As you know, VAWA currently includes a few programs that address services for teen dating violence as well as the prevention of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. Three of these programs (Services for Youth Victims, Training for Schools, and Access to Justice for Youth) focus on providing services to teen victims, working with schools to help students who are victims and creating community-based responses that support advocacy and a more coordinated response to the needs of teens and youth. The current prevention programs under Department of Justice (Services for Children and Youth Exposed to Violence, Engaging Men and Youth Exposed to Violence) include services for children who are growing up in violent homes, education for young families who are at risk for violence, and programs to engage men and boys as leaders and role models in changing attitudes and behaviors around these issues.

While all of these programs were created in the last VAWA reauthorization approved by Congress in 2005, unfortunately, we do not have much information to share on the results of the programs. Over the last three years, two of the youth programs and the children exposed to violence and engaging men programs have received funding; however, only in the last year has the Department of Justice actually released the funds and issued grants to begin implementing the work. We look forward to being able to document the work and measuring its effectiveness moving forward.

The President's Fiscal Year 2012 budget request would have most of the youth and prevention programs merged into one consolidated program known as "Services, Education, Protection and Justice for Young Victims of Violence." I understand the push to consolidate programs and support this effort as long as the goals and purpose areas of each program are not lost; however, this consolidated program would still not provide a comprehensive, community response framework to preventing and intervening early on this issue.

The legislative proposal that our working group prepared has been given to your staff and is based on the lessons of the *Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships* initiative. Through this initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Blue Shield of California Foundation, 11 communities are working to create innovative prevention models that can be replicated across the country for youth ages 11-14. Each community also has developed a comprehensive plan that focuses on four core strategies involving education, policy change, community outreach and cutting-edge social marketing campaigns to empower teens to develop healthier relationships throughout their lives.

Specifically, I suggest that the VAWA reauthorization bill continue to support the existing prevention programs (Children Exposed to Violence and Engaging Men and Youth) and increase the focus on teen dating violence by providing grants through the Office on Violence Against Women in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services to local community partnerships to establish and operate programs targeting youth between the ages of 10 and 19. The teen dating violence prevention programming would:

- Create age and developmentally appropriate education programs targeting young people ages 10-19;
- Include education and mobilization for parents, teachers, coaches, mentors, faith-leaders and other "influencers" as role models and educators for young people;
- Work with middle schools, where little education is currently being provided, in addition to high schools, to integrate healthy relationship education and dating violence prevention programming;

- Link schools and youth-serving organizations with domestic and sexual violence agencies to ensure services are available if a young person is already being victimized.

Recommendations for ESEA Reauthorization

In the previous Administration, I worked with your office to inquire if funding from the Safe and Drug-Free School programs could be used for teen dating violence prevention. As you may remember, the agency responded and said this work was outside the purpose of their programs. I am pleased that this office under the leadership of Secretary Duncan and Assistant Deputy Secretary Kevin Jennings recognizes the importance of preventing teen dating violence in creating a safe and supportive school environment. To guarantee that schools are aware that they can address teen dating violence as they also address bullying and harassment, I am supportive of an effort by Congresswoman Gwen Moore to introduce a bill to change the Elementary and Secondary Education Act entitled "Stop Abuse for Every Teen Act" or the "SAFE Teen Act." This bill would:

- Expressly authorize schools to use existing grant funding for teen dating violence prevention;
- Highlight teen dating violence prevention as part of the comprehensive, community prevention program, *Safe Schools, Healthy Students*, that already funds prevention activities;
- Support better teen dating violence data to understand the scope of the problem as well as having a means of measuring the impact of prevention programs and policies;
- Support promising practices to further replicate, refine and test prevention models; and
- Allow schools to use existing technical assistance funding to get expertise on this issue.

I am pleased that this bill would not be a new mandated program and the cost is included in existing grant streams. As the Senate HELP Committee considers this issue, I hope you consider promoting these same changes.

**Witness Statement submitted by Deborah DeBare,
Executive Director, RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence
June 3, 2011**

Organizational Background/History

The Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV) was incorporated in 1979 to assist and support Rhode Island's six shelters for battered women in statewide planning and development. The RICADV and our member agencies have been providing services to victims of domestic violence for the last 24 years, consistently expanding services in an attempt to provide the comprehensive support battered women need. The RICADV serves as a resource for our member organizations, providing training, technical assistance, statewide planning, needs assessment, community education, and gathering and disseminating resources and information critical to our work. Our member organizations and the areas they cover are:

Sojourner House - (Northern Rhode Island and Providence)
Women's Center of RI - (Providence/East Providence)
Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center - (Central Rhode Island)
Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County - (Washington County)
Women's Resource Center - (Newport & Bristol Counties)
The Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center - (Blackstone Valley)

The RICADV and its member agencies have a well-recognized track record of successfully administering and implementing effective programs for victims of domestic violence. We are currently involved in various statewide and national collaborations with law enforcement, prosecutors, and other community organizations, such as the Violence Against Women Act Planning Committee, the Attorney General's Task Force on Domestic Violence, the State Steering Committee for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, the VAWA Curriculum Committee, the National Network to End Domestic Violence's Public Policy Committee, and the Domestic Violence Awareness Advisory Group for the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

Statement of Need

In the United States, the crisis of domestic violence has reached epidemic proportions. Families from all income brackets, educational levels, and racial and ethnic origins feel its effects. On average, more than three women a day are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the United States¹ and women experience two million injuries from intimate partner violence each year.²

Rhode Island is no exception to the national norm. In 2010, Rhode Island's six domestic violence agencies provided a comprehensive array of services to over 10,400 unduplicated victims of domestic violence, and responded to 15,000 crisis hotline calls.

The impact of domestic violence on children who are witnessing the abuse has only recently been recognized. Growing up in a violent home may be a terrifying and traumatic experience that can affect every aspect of a child's life, growth and development, and lead to higher risks of repeating the cycle of abuse as teens and young adults. In spite of this, we know that when properly identified and addressed, the effects of domestic violence on children can be greatly mitigated.

On a single day in 2010, 20,406 children nationwide were living in a domestic violence shelter or transitional housing facility.³ Children who witness domestic violence are more likely to show anxiety, depression, traumatic symptoms and temperamental problems than other children.⁴ Research studies show a high correlation between child abuse and domestic violence, juvenile delinquency and domestic violence, and animal abuse and domestic violence. Females who are exposed to their parents' domestic violence as adolescents are significantly more likely to become victims of dating

¹ Intimate Partner Violence in the United States. 2006. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Available at <http://www/ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/intimate/ipv.htm>

² CDC. Adverse Health Conditions and Health Risk Behaviors Associated with Intimate partner Violence. 2008. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, February 2008. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5705a1.htm>

³ Domestic Violence Counts 08: A 24 Hour census of domestic violence shelters and services across the United States. 2009 National Network to End Domestic Violence. Available at http://nnedv.org/docs/Census/DVCounts2008/DVCounts08_Report_Color.pdf

⁴ Edelson, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, #14, 1999

violence than daughters of nonviolent parents.⁵ Clearly, intervention with the children who witness domestic violence is a critical strategy to help break the cycle of intergenerational violence.

The six member agencies of the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV) have a strong 35-year track record of providing safe shelter and supportive services to children who witness domestic violence. Over 50% of the clients served in the shelter programs are children. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg, as there are thousands of other families experiencing domestic violence in Rhode Island, most of whom do not seek shelter. Data from the RI Supreme Court's Domestic Violence Training and Monitoring Unit indicate that in 2010 there were 5,691 domestic violence arrests, and there were children witnessed the abuse in 28% of these cases.⁶

In 2010, even with reductions in state funding, the member agencies of the RICADV were able to provide services to a total of 452 children in 2010 (ages 0-4: 243, ages 5-9: 135, ages 10-14: 74) in addition to the 268 children who received shelter. Services provided include expressive therapy, art therapy, school supports, advocacy with medical issues, and individual counseling. The EBC Center provided counseling services in 2010 to 54 victims of childhood sexual abuse. The Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center served over 61 families with children in 2010 through the Safe Families program, a pilot program which formed the foundation of an expansion of the initiative. In addition to these direct intervention services, an additional 19,000 children and youth received educational and prevention programming through our member agencies last year.

All six of the RICADV's member agencies provide outreach, education and supportive services to schools to help communities address teen dating violence. Teen dating violence, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is the verbal, physical, sexual or emotional violence within a dating relationship, and it is also more prevalent in the United States than most people realize. Approximately 1 in 3 adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse

⁵ Nolan, VJ, Liller, KD, McDermott, RJ, Coulter, ML, and Seraphine, A.E. 2004. Is Adolescent Sibling Violence a Precursor to College Dating Violence? *American Journal of Health and Behavior*. 28: 813-823

⁶ RI Kids Count Factbook. 2011

from a dating partner, a figure which far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth.⁷

In Rhode Island, an estimated 11% of high school students say that they have been hit, slapped, or otherwise hurt physically by a girlfriend or boyfriend on purpose.⁸ Ten percent of Rhode Island high school students say that they have been forced to have sex when they did not want to, compared to eight percent nationally.⁹ Teen dating violence pervades all communities, and has victims in every single city and town in Rhode Island. In fact, the proportion of RI high school students physically hurt by a girlfriend or boyfriend worsened between 2001 and 2007 (9% vs. 14% as did the proportion who reported being forced to have sexual intercourse (8 vs. 10%).¹⁰

What used to be considered a possible problem among older teens has now become an issue among all teenagers, and even among the middle school "tweens." Only half of all tweens surveyed nationally (children aged 11 to 14) claim to know the warning signs of a bad or unhealthy relationship.¹¹ Unfortunately, we know that if teens are not able to recognize the warning signs, then they are more likely to end up in unhealthy or dangerous relationships. Teen victims of dating violence are also more likely than their non-abused peers to engage in other risky or unhealthy activities, such as smoking, using drugs, engaging in unhealthy diet behaviors, risky sexual behaviors and attempting or considering suicide.¹²

According to the data collected by the DELTA State Steering Committee (a committee made up of the Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund, Day One, the RICADV's six member agencies, and the Katie Brown Educational Program) the following have been accomplished to date:

- o 22 middle schools have had staff training
- o 20 high schools have had staff training

⁷ Davis, Antoinette. 2008. Interpersonal and Physical Dating Violence among Teens. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency Focus.

⁸ RI Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009, RI Department of Health

⁹ RI and National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, 2007, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

¹⁰ RICADV State Prevention Plan, Addressing the Violence Before it Starts, as cited on p.2, 2011; from RI Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2007

¹¹ Teenage Research Unlimited and Liz Claiborne, Inc., 2008, Study on Teen Dating Abuse

¹² Silverman, 2001. Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Abuse, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy and Suicidality. Journal of the American Medical Association

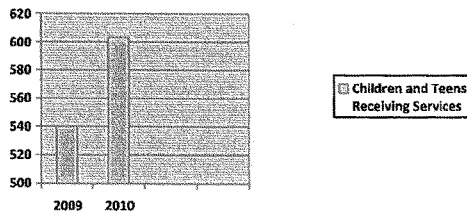
- o 31 middle schools have had classroom sessions for youth
- o 38 high schools have had classroom sessions for youth

Additionally, the RICADV's six member agencies reached 19,884 youth last year alone with violence prevention education in the elementary, middle, and high schools across the state.¹³ Topics include bullying, conflict resolution, media literacy, communication, teen dating violence, and healthy relationships.

Program Service Gaps in the Community

With recent state budget cuts, funding for children's services has been cut by 60%. According to the census data compiled by the National Network to End Domestic Violence, 83% of Rhode Island domestic violence agencies reported an increased need for such services, while 100% of the agencies reported a decrease in funding available to provide the services.¹⁴ Furthermore, victims of domestic violence identified that they needed more services for their children in 85% of the survey responses received through the RICADV's 2010 Outcome Measures summary report.¹⁵ General mental health or social service agencies have waiting lists for children's counseling services, and there are limitations to such programs' ability to effectively address the security and confidentiality needs of families dealing with domestic violence.

The following chart highlights the increased demand for services for children who witness domestic violence, and teens who experience dating violence in Rhode Island.

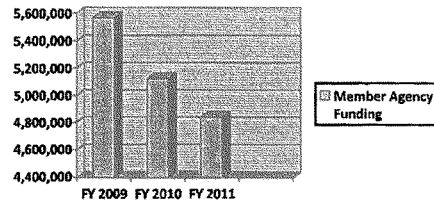


¹³ RICADV Annual data 2010

¹⁴ Domestic Violence Counts 2010, 2011 National Network to End Domestic Violence, available at www.nnedv.org

¹⁵ RICADV, 2010 Outcome Measures Report, RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

This dramatic increase in the need for services is juxtaposed against the cuts in funding that our member agencies have experienced in recent years.



Prevention

Rhode Island has been a leader in the prevention of domestic violence and dating violence. We have put resources into working to change public attitudes about the issue for over ten years, with broad-based public awareness campaigns. Our first public awareness campaign ten years ago, titled "Domestic Violence: It is Your Business", focused on bystanders. The campaign urged Rhode Islanders to change their attitude about domestic violence from thinking about it as a "private matter" toward recognizing that they have a role to play in intervening and stopping domestic abuse. Since then, we have been fortunate to be one of 14 states funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's DELTA program, to develop a statewide Prevention Plan for domestic violence, and to launch local capacity-building initiatives to lay the foundation for broad based prevention work.

It is essential that Rhode Island prioritize primary prevention of domestic violence by allocating resources and building capacity to implement and evaluate prevention programs. For the past 30 years, Rhode Island has devoted millions of dollars to providing intervention services to victims and survivors of domestic violence and their families. The Violence Against Women movement has made huge strides throughout this time by passing legislation that holds batterers accountable and maintains victim safety by influencing systems and creating policies to minimize barriers for victims'

safety, by shifting victim blaming attitudes through social marketing and communications, by educating RI residents on issues related to domestic violence and by providing interventions like shelter, court advocacy, support groups, and children's services. However, despite these accomplishments, there is no clear evidence that the prevalence and incidence of domestic violence has decreased.

In order to achieve social change and create a world that is free from violence, we need to allocate resources to primary prevention work as well as intervention. Primary prevention provides the opportunity to examine what is at the root of the problem -- the underlying attitudes, beliefs, and norms that support IPV -- and implement prevention strategies that address those risk and protective factors. Primary prevention also provides the community with the opportunity to take ownership of the issue, because community mobilization is required to create the necessary social change. Primary prevention calls for collaboration across sectors of the community (domestic violence advocates, religious leaders, community based organizations, business owners, educators, state agencies, youth, parents, etc.) to collectively address IPV and shift norms so that communities will no longer tolerate domestic violence.

The domestic violence movement has spent the past 30 years building up its "defensive line" in the struggle to end Violence Against Women. We have scored a lot of points and won a lot of games through the passage of VAWA, mandatory arrest laws, and development of safe homes and support services. In order to win the championship game however, we need to build our offensive line as well. We need to engage communities across the states in the primary prevention of domestic violence in order to stop individuals from becoming victims or perpetrators of abuse. Rhode Island needs the synergy of both domestic violence intervention services and domestic violence primary prevention strategies in order to achieve the behavior and norms changes that we so urgently need.

Rhode Island became one of 14 states piloting the DELTA Project in the spring of 2003. Prior to the DELTA Project, there were 13 coordinated community response teams (CCRs) in Rhode Island, all of which were established in the rural parts of the state and which focused on bringing domestic violence intervention services into the community. CCRs comprise community leaders (faith, business, schools, etc.) and residents of the towns in which they were established, with support from the local domestic violence

and sexual assault organizations. With the DELTA Project, Rhode Island had the opportunity to create new CCRs in four cities: Cranston, Newport, Pawtucket, and Providence. All four focused on implementing domestic violence *prevention* strategies in their communities. The focus on prevention was groundbreaking. The RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV) and its member agencies had always recognized that there was a need to do prevention work in RI; however, this was the first time that resources were designated specifically for prevention.

Rhode Island was selected as a pilot state for DELTA by the CDC because of the RICADV's strong history of multidisciplinary collaboration and leadership in the areas of policy, communications and training, as well as the state's readiness to implement the DELTA Project. During the first three years of DELTA, the funding supported local CCRs, to provide CCRs with training and technical assistance, and to monitor local CCRs' progress in implementing IPV primary prevention initiatives. On the community level, CCRs were tasked with developing local prevention plans and evaluating their community based prevention efforts with support from the Empowerment Evaluator.¹⁶

The primary prevention plan that has been developed by the RI State Steering Committee for the Prevention of Domestic and Dating Violence (SSC) is the first step in a long-term process to alter societal norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that support domestic violence. The Rhode Island SSC has identified evidence-informed prevention strategies targeting men and teens as priorities.

The State Plan has the following goals regarding capacity building:

- Expand the capacity of existing domestic violence prevention programs to engage in primary prevention through training and technical assistance
- Increase the number of evidence-informed domestic violence primary prevention programs in Rhode Island
- Facilitate coalition building among violence prevention practitioners and facilitate partnerships between evaluation researchers and local practitioners
- Improve state data collection systems' accessibility

¹⁶ Empowerment Evaluation is a type of evaluation in which the evaluator is not the traditional outside observer, but rather an active coach and teacher that helps to build participants' capacity to continually improve their initiatives through process and outcome evaluation.

The State Plan also has the following goals targeting adult men, and youth ages 12 – 18:

- Decrease the perception that masculinity includes violent behavior
- Encourage bystanders to intervene by promoting the use of evidence-informed strategies
- Cultivate male champions to publicly challenge traditional gender norms
- Increase the social competencies' of RI youth
- Promote the integration of dating violence primary prevention concepts in existing school-based strategies
- Disseminate education and training materials on promoting health relationships and on social norms change activities to RI youth groups, community organizations, after school programs and camps

The RICADV is spearheading the implementation of the State Plan, supporting the development of primary prevention guidelines, providing training and technical assistance, and conducting outreach to violence prevention practitioners in the state regarding training needs in the area of primary prevention and evaluation. We are committed to ensuring that evidence-informed programming and strong evaluation are key components of all the prevention work being conducted, as resources are scarce and we want to ensure that the funds are used to maximize the resources to have the greatest impact.

Specific strategies that the State Plan identifies for working with youth 12 and older include the following:

- Close to Home Social Norms Change Activities (participatory research)
- Safe Dates, a school based program that involves an evidence-based nine session curriculum, a play performed by students and a poster contest
- SADA (Students Against Domestic Abuse), a Newport primary prevention strategy incorporating positive youth development theory, prevention principles, youth leadership and activism
- Young Men's Work and Young Women's Lives, curricula developed by Paul Kivel to provide young men and women with communication, problem solving and health relationship skills while they examine gender norms, oppressions and the roots of male violence

Looking to the Future: VAWA

What is clear with the recent research and focus on prevention is that we need to start working with youth as early as possible. Intervening when youth are forming, or about to form their first dating relationship is critical. Rhode Island needs to promote social competencies and positive identities for all Rhode Island youth. The acquisition of skills like decision-making and peaceful conflict resolution may serve as protective factors for domestic violence victimization and perpetration for youth.¹⁷

Through the Violence Against Women Act, funds that are dedicated to address the critical programs for children who witness domestic violence and youth at risk for dating violence are more important today than ever before. With the rising demand for services, and the increased factors putting children and youth at risk, the programs identified in the Violence Against Women Act need to be fully funded, not just for the citizens of Rhode Island, but for the citizens of the United States of America.

Due to the overwhelming success of VAWA funded programs, more and more victims are coming forward for help each year. For example, VAWA-trained police now give out domestic violence hotline numbers, which in turn encourages more victims to look for services. **This rising demand for services, without a concurrent increase in funding, means that many desperate victims are turned away from life-saving services.** In just one day nearly 9,000 requests for services went unmet across the country due to a lack of resources.¹⁸

With the upcoming VAWA reauthorization in 2011, Congress has an opportunity to strengthen the current successful grant programs and include programs to better ensure that victims and their families are safe. An additional focus for the VAWA 2011 reauthorization should be focusing on prevention of dating violence, domestic violence, sexual abuse and stalking.

¹⁷ Protective factors are associated with decreasing the likelihood of violence perpetration, RICADV State Prevention Plan, 2011

¹⁸ VAWA Measuring Effectiveness Initiative, 2003 Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service

Conclusion

The Violence Against Women Act is effective. Service providers, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, and others in the continuum of services are coordinating their efforts to ensure that victims and their families are independent and safe. However, the job is not done. The cycle of abuse needs to be broken by incorporating a focus on prevention. In order to continue the progress that we've accomplished already, we must strengthen VAWA so that it can work for all victims of domestic violence, whether they live in rural or urban areas, whether they are children or elderly victims, whether they speak English or another language—every victim deserves the chance to escape from violence. Congress has a unique opportunity to make a difference in the lives of so many by reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act with key and strategic improvements.

Testimony of Katherine Reilly, MPH

Start Strong Rhode Island, Director

Sojourner House, Providence, Rhode Island

June 3, 2011

Field Hearing of U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism

Chairman Whitehouse, thank you for the invitation to testify on our programs aimed at preventing teen dating violence through the *Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships* initiative.

I direct the *Start Strong Rhode Island Project*, a partnership lead by Sojourner House—one of six domestic violence member agencies of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Start Strong Rhode Island partners with Young Voices and the Rhode Island Department of Education to develop and implement innovative approaches to preventing teen dating violence. Before coming to Sojourner House, I worked at the Rhode Island Department of Education where I was honored to coordinate the implementation of the Lindsay Ann Burke Act. I appreciate the opportunity to testify along with my colleagues on this panel, and I appreciate your leadership in Congress to prevent teen dating violence.

As background, *Start Strong* is a four-year, \$18 million investment in 11 geographically and ethnically diverse communities across the country funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with support from the Blue Shield of California Foundation. It is the largest national initiative ever funded to prevent teen dating violence and abuse. *Start Strong* is taking prevention to a new level by targeting 11 to 14 year olds to teach them about healthy relationships through education, policy change, community outreach, and social marketing. Through this large investment, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is showing that to truly prevent teen dating violence, we need to focus on middle school. Middle school years are the first time that many youth start establishing romantic relationships and advances in brain development indicate this is the period of social emotional learning and empathy maturity. Here in Rhode Island, we rally our entire community by working with teens, parents, caregivers, educators, and community leaders to start a dialogue and build environments that support healthy relationships.

Teens know what is unhealthy and see negative influences, but youth everywhere need to be educated about what is a healthy relationship. We use evidence-based curriculum in schools to teach that a healthy relationship constitutes of respect, safety, support, individuality, fairness, equality, acceptance, honest, trust, and effective communication skills. By learning and adopting these skills, we can not only prevent teen dating violence and future adult domestic or sexual violence, but other negative behavioral impacts such as unintended teen pregnancy, alcohol and substance abuse, and other behaviors such as bullying.

In order to be effective, our prevention strategies must be comprehensive, frequent and present in every part in the youth's day that includes in school, after-school, at home, and in their community. Our programs also need to be compelling so the messaging is engaging and relevant.

Start Strong Rhode Island brings comprehensive and engaging prevention strategies to our school and community through a few key strategies. We are using Fourth R, an evidence-based healthy relationships curriculum, and have reached over 600 7th and 8th graders since October 2009. This social and emotional learning curriculum integrates interactive storytelling, multimedia, and performance.

Other strategies we are using include "Passport to Social Media," which helps parents prevent abuse in a digital world. We have developed hkupwithrespect.com, an interactive video blog that gets teens talking about what's cool and not cool in relationships, and so far over 300 youth from around the country have shared their stories. A 14 year old girl from Providence wrote on our site: "I go out with an amazing guy, he cheated on me twice. I can't break up with him...every time I get him mad he yells at me and calls me a snake." A 15-year-old girl from Somerset, Massachusetts posted this message: "So my boyfriend's extremely bipolar. He makes me miserable but I love him. I cry almost every time I'm with him and he laughs right in my face."

To complement this work, we have localized "That's Not Cool," a national public education campaign to prevent teen dating abuse. Developed by Futures Without Violence, formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund, in partnership with the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women and the Advertising Council, the campaign uses digital examples of controlling behavior online and by cell phone to encourage teens to draw their own line about what is, or is not, acceptable relationship behavior.

Finally, in October of this year, we will release a videogame that will be the first immersive videogame to support the teaching and learning of positive, protective relationship skills. This is leveraging the power of gaming to create an engaging virtual teen dating violence prevention curriculum.

We are investing significant resources in the social media tools because we know that social and electronic media are no longer a pastime. A recent poll from the Pew Center for American Life shows that half of teens send 50 or more text messages a day, or 1,500 texts a month, and one in three send more than 100 texts a day, or more than 3,000 texts a month. Social media and mobile technologies are key communication and education tools if we want to truly engage and change youth behavior.

While we need to be aware of the risks of these technologies such as cyber-bullying and sexting, we need to utilize them as opportunities. Social media and mobile technologies can be used to promote prevention and responsible bystander behavior. Any effort to stop teen dating abuse and violence must help youth learn to use these technologies responsibly, and use them to disseminate prevention messages.

The videogame as with all of our tools and materials are youth-informed. Youth-informed programs are critical to identifying strategies and tactics to promote respectful, non-violent dating relationships and reducing emotional, physical, and sexual dating violence. We work with Young Voices, a youth

advocacy and action research group, and other youth leaders, to make sure we are talking *with* teens and not *at* teens about the solution. Our youth allow us to use pop culture to stay relevant, and help us know best the stresses and pressures their peers are experiencing, how youth are using new technologies, what role models are being heard, and what messaging is resonating most clearly.

Each of the 11 *Start Strong* communities across the country has innovative strategies and tools to change policy, use social media, and reach parents and older influencers to be partners in this prevention work. I urge you to view activities happening in other states and a model middle school prevention and response policy that has been developed to support these program lessons by going to startstrongteens.org.

To reach and engage youth, it is not enough to teach prevention education in the classroom. Advocates, parents, and youth leaders need to meet kids where they live and play, and online technologies are the way to help them choose healthy relationships on and off line. Any federal policy that attempts to prevent teen dating violence needs to incorporate these lessons and strategies.

**Katie Brown Educational Program
Testimony for Congressional Hearing on Domestic Violence Prevention
June 3, 2011**

First, I want to thank Senator Whitehouse for hosting this hearing regarding the prevention of teen dating violence and the Violence Against Women Act. I write as the Executive Director of the Katie Brown Educational Program, a relationship violence prevention program described in greater detail below. I feel privileged to provide information about our program and the importance of prevention programs in addressing, and eventually ending, domestic and teen dating violence.

Before I describe KBEP, I want to share my own perspective on the prevention of domestic and teen dating violence to give context to the rest of my testimony. For fifteen years, I have worked with victims of domestic violence and their children, including teen victims of dating violence and sexual assault. I have seen the profound impact of such violence, working with victims in shelter, hospital, and community based settings. This career path has been extremely challenging and rewarding, and I have learned so much from providing crisis and ongoing support to victims of violence. While this intervention is of utmost importance to help victims heal, it does not address the root of the problem or reduce the prevalence of such violence. I often found myself thinking about an individual client and what might have been different for them if someone had taught or modeled for them what it means to have a healthy relationship. If this person had some education when they were younger about protecting themselves from an abusive relationship, what would have been different about their life? Or, if someone had taught a young person that dealing with conflict through violence is not okay, would they make different choices? What I kept coming back to was the thought that youth need information and education about how to have healthy relationships that are free from violence. Too many youth are not prepared with this vital information, and are not able to recognize the warning signs of an abusive relationship or refrain from perpetrating violence themselves. This is what led me to prevention work and the Katie Brown Educational Program, which exemplifies for me the important work that needs to be done to help young people navigate their relationships without violence.

The Katie Brown Educational Program is a non-profit educational organization that was formed in 2001 to promote respectful relationships by teaching alternatives to relationship violence. Our program is named after a young woman from Barrington who was only 20 years old when she was killed by her dating partner. In the aftermath of her death, friends of the Brown family worked with an area domestic violence service provider to conceptualize a program that would give young people the skills to prevent such a thing from happening to any other young person. We do this work to honor Katie's life, as well as honor anyone who has been impacted by relationship violence.

KBEP has developed an innovative relationship violence prevention curriculum that our Educators teach to fifth grade through high school students, as well as teenagers and adults in non-traditional settings such as group homes, drug courts, and correctional facilities. In traditional classroom settings, the age-appropriate curriculum is typically presented over four or

five consecutive hour-long sessions. The first day of all grades addresses the different types of violence in relationships, as well as the role of power and control as a factor in unhealthy relationships. The subsequent sessions for each grade combine discussion and hands-on activities that center on a common theme for each grade level, and all reinforce the overarching themes of accountability, respect, and rights in relationships. Our goal is to teach youth information and skills they can use to make healthy decisions in all of their relationships, which is why we describe ourselves as a relationship violence prevention program instead of specifying dating violence or bullying, although both are addressed at length in the curriculum. Each grade's curriculum also includes information about the use of technology to perpetrate violence, with examples of behaviors such as texting, instant messaging, and use of social networking to be hurtful to a peer or dating partner. To date, the KBEP has educated over 45,000 students in fifth grade through high school in communities throughout Southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The need for quality prevention programming that addresses violence in youth relationships has been demonstrated repeatedly, on both national and local levels. On a national level, 55% of students between the ages of eight and eleven report that bullying is a "big problem" for people their age, and 74% of students of the same age report that they get teased or bullied at school (www.talkingwithkids.org/violence). Like bullying, dating violence affects an alarming number of our youth. According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund, approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner -- a figure that far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth. We at KBEP strongly embrace the belief that early and frequent education about preventing violence is incredibly effective and worthwhile. This belief has been reinforced by a 2007 study from the CDC on the effectiveness of universal school-based programs for the prevention of violent and aggressive behavior. As the report noted, "All school antiviolence program strategies (e.g., informational cognitive/affective, and social skills building) were associated with a reduction in violent behavior. All program foci (e.g., disruptive or antisocial behavior, bullying or dating violence) similarly were associated with reduced violent behavior". The study then went on to quantify economic impact of such programming, including costs of providing the program and benefits of decreased tax dollars spent on criminal justice and healthcare. In terms of cost-benefit ratio, a benefit of \$3.14 for every dollar spent on prevention was noted.

The Katie Brown Educational Program provides relationship violence prevention programming to youth in area schools that closely mirrors the models examined in the above study. Our interactive curriculum addresses a range of age-appropriate topics related to healthy relationships. These topics include, but are not limited to: the types of violence found in relationships, standing up for yourself vs. fighting back, personal power and self esteem, respecting personal boundaries, healthy expression of anger, qualities of healthy friendships, expectations of dating relationships, warning signs of an abusive relationship, conflict resolution, stereotypes, and the cycle of violence. The response from students is overwhelmingly positive, as evidenced by their responses on post-tests given at the end of the program. As one Providence student noted on their post-test, "The most important thing I learned was the actual definition of respect... I really must work on that."

KBEP is a universal prevention program, serving all youth regardless of socioeconomic background, history, or perceived risk of being involved in an abusive relationship. Given that, it is our strong belief that all youth need and can benefit from programming that teaches skills and techniques to deal with violence in relationships, as all children are at risk of experience this dynamic at some point in their lives. It is our hope that students will utilize the information and skills gained through participation in the program to manage anger and conflict without violence, recognize the warning signs of an abusive relationship, and advocate for their needs while also respecting the needs of others. The ultimate objective is to reduce, and eventually eliminate, violence in youth relationships.

We know that KBEP is having an impact on area youth, as evidenced by surveys administered to all program participants. All students complete pre- and post-tests designed to measure changes in beliefs and attitudes related to violence in relationships. The pre- and post-tests include both quantitative and qualitative questions, and were revised this past summer to reflect the changes and updates in our curriculum. Our short term goal is to demonstrate a shift in attitudes and thinking upon post-test at the completion of the program. While each grade's curriculum is unique, there are some overall themes that run through the entire program and that are measurable via our post-tests. These include demonstrating an increased understanding of the types of violence found in relationships, a change in social norms/acceptance of violence in relationships, improved self esteem, and increase ability to regulate emotions such as anger. In addition to these themes, each grade's pre- and post-tests measure outcomes specific to the content of the curriculum for that grade. KBEP is working with researchers from Bradley Hasbro Children's Research Center to compile and analyze the quantitative and qualitative data. KBEP also looks at students' own measurement of their learning. For example, in the 2009-2010 school year, 94% of participating high school students agreed that KBEP made them more aware of the warning signs of unhealthy relationships, 92% agreed that they felt better prepared to make healthy choices about relationships, and 90% agreed that they were willing to change some of their ideas in order to have healthier relationships. Ninety two percent of participating 5th graders agreed with the statement, "I feel like I can now stick up for myself without hurting anyone".

As mentioned before, the CDC has published a report that clearly identifies the worth of universal prevention programs that focus on education and skill building to address youth violence, including the issues of dating violence and bullying. This report recommended programs whose models are very similar to that offered by KBEP. The report ends with the following statement, "U.S. schools provide a critical opportunity for changing societal behavior... this opportunity is difficult to overestimate. The potential benefits of improved school function alone are notable. The broader and longer term benefits in terms of reduced delinquency and antisocial behavior are yet more substantial. Universal school-based violence prevention programs represent an important means of reducing violent and aggressive behavior in the United States".

We have come a long way in our understanding of domestic and teen dating violence as public health issues. It is also imperative that we understand violence as an education issue as well, and

not just because school settings provide an important venue for prevention programs, as mentioned above. A recent study published by the CDC indicated an increase in the prevalence of dating violence as grades in school became poorer, with the prevalence lowest among adolescents earning mostly A's and highest among those earning mostly C's, D's, and F's. The CDC fact sheet about the impact of dating violence on success in school also noted that at-risk middle and high school students' perceptions of danger at school can negatively influence their confidence in their ability to meet school-related demands and challenges. We know anecdotally that when young people feel unsafe with a dating partner, it is a barrier to focusing their energy on academic success. In my previous positions working with adults, adolescents and children impacted by domestic and dating violence, I heard countless times about young people distracted at school because of intrusive fearful thoughts about their abusive partner or constant texts and messages from their partner throughout the school day. The availability and use of technology among youth creates a situation that is increasingly difficult for school settings. Teens have instant and constant access to each other, even when they are supposed to concentrating on their classroom work. This constant communication is particularly harmful in a relationship that is abusive, giving the abuser countless opportunities to harass and demand attention from a dating partner. It is extremely difficult for a young person to focus on academics when they are worried about responding to their abuser or the consequences of their response. There have also been too many news reports of a hostile school environment for a student after a dating partner (or peer) distributes hurtful information or pictures about a student through social networking sites or cell phones. The ability to make issues in an individual relationship the business of an entire peer/school community has been greatly facilitated through technology, making it that much more difficult for a young person to "escape" abusive behaviors and focus on academics. Given the national focus on educational reform and academic success, it is clear that addressing violence that impacts youth is a key element allowing for academic progress.

In recent months, much attention has been given to the issue of bullying, both in terms of prevention and response. Schools are struggling with how to reduce the impact of bullying on students and the school environment. As my colleagues and I continue to emphasize whenever possible, there is a great deal of overlap between the dynamics of violence in a peer relationship and violence in a dating relationship. The components of both issues can be remarkably similar: both involve one member of the relationship using power and control to cause hurt and fear in the other, both impact the health and well being of the victim, and the availability of technology has exacerbated both dynamics. Both have significant impact on school settings and academic success, for the same reasons outlined above. The negative impact is not isolated to the victimized child/adolescent. The CDC fact sheet quoted above also notes the following:

- Witnessing violence has been associated with decreased school attendance and academic performance
- Adolescents who report witnessing and experiencing violence may internalize these experiences or act out as a result – leading to both depression and behavior and emotional issues
- Teens who are physically and verbally aggressive in the classroom may have a negative impact on the education of their classmates by diverting their teachers from teaching and reducing the amount of time students are engaged in learning

- Approximately one in four teens (7th through 12th graders) agreed that the threat of violence at their school interfered with their teacher's effectiveness, disrupting their learning.

While these statements were on a fact sheet about the impact of dating violence on school settings, all the above statements would also apply to the dynamic of bullying, or peer violence. This speaks to thinking about dating violence and bullying/peer violence not as two separate issues, but as a continuum of behaviors that need to be addressed to ensure the health, well-being, and academic success of our youth. Too often, these issues are looked at as distinct phenomenon, exemplified by local schools often having separate policies that address bullying and dating violence. This can be confusing and challenging for school administrators. Additionally, local and national prevention models most often focus on one or the other, as opposed to the continuum of behaviors that constitute relationship violence. KBEP is committed to addressing this continuum, with the strong belief that teaching a variety of skills related to healthy communication and expression of feelings will help youth be safe in all relationships, whether it be with a peer or dating partner. At the core of these issues is the need to teach young people about healthy relationships, and that violence is more than just physical assaults. We need to teach youth that it is never okay to say hurtful things about someone's appearance, post a rumor about someone on a social networking site, work to isolate someone by turning others against them, destroy someone's possessions, or threaten to disclose someone's personal information – no matter whether it is a peer or dating partner. We also need to teach youth that they deserve to be treated with respect, and that this respect should be a part of all of their relationships – no matter whether it is a peer or dating partner. We should be teaching youth to think critically about their relationships and their own behaviors, challenge them to examine stereotypes and how they influence their perceptions of themselves, peers and dating partners. It is critical that we give them the skills and information they need to examine their relationships and their own behaviors, determine what is healthy and what is not, and hopefully, make changes that will make their relationships safer. To sum it up, we need to focus more of our attention and resources on teaching youth about healthy relationships, or we will have to continue to respond to repeated incidents of dating violence and bullying in our schools and communities.

An example from our own curriculum that has broad reaching impact is as following. Our seventh grade curriculum includes an activity about conflict resolution. After a brainstorming session about what students think of when they hear the word conflict, our Educator helps students make a distinction between positive and negative aspects and outcomes of conflict. The Educator then leads them to a discussion about how conflict is not always negative, and is, in fact, a completely normal part of any relationship. Instead of the conflict being negative, our choices on how we handle conflict will determine whether the experience is positive or negative. The Educator then explores with the students three different responses to conflict – aggressive, passive and assertive. The students discuss what those responses look and sound like, and then create skits demonstrating the different responses to a variety of conflict scenarios. The goal is to have students better understand that conflict does not need to be avoided, but can be dealt with assertively, meaning that one can stand up for themselves while also respecting the rights and feelings of another person. When students understand and practice this skill, it will help them make healthy decisions in all of their relationships.

In summary, in order to see a reduction in domestic and teen dating violence, it is imperative that we address these issues at their roots. Children do not spontaneously know how to have respectful relationships – they must be taught. They must be taught both how to recognize the warning signs and protect themselves from abusive relationships, and they must also be taught that it is their responsibility to refrain from perpetrating violence against others. We need to teach children how to stand up for their own rights while also respecting the rights of others, and we need to help children give and expect respect in all of their relationships. This is what will bring a reduction in relationship violence, changing beliefs and attitudes about the role of violence in relationships, and helping youth develop healthy expectations of peers and dating partners.

On April 4th, 2011, Vice President Joe Biden spoke at the University of New Hampshire about the responsibility of colleges and universities in the prevention of sexual violence. He picked UNH as the venue for this speech because it is the home of a model program to address sexual violence on campus – SHARPP, or the Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program. He was introduced by UNH senior and SHARPP volunteer Sara Jane Bibeau, who is also a former KBEP intern. In his remarks, Vice President Biden spoke passionately about not just responding to victims, but working to prevent such violence so that there are no more victims. He summed up his thoughts with the following statement: “Really, changing attitudes is what we need to do most. Folks, if we are going to end violence, not reduce, but end it, we are going to have to change attitudes. That is the core of the problem.” It is our hope that more and more people will work together to do just that, change attitudes about violence and build a community where violence is simply not acceptable or tolerated.

