**Interested in reading the full legislation?**

* Here’s the link to [SB1502](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Y5v2T3Wbr6IBVqoCUewpXKBkr7txnwD9/view?usp=sharing).

**How will DVSJA help survivors of domestic violence?**

* Check out our [Fact Sheet](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1twIWbSUWJJ9sJ3Eb84I56dmjuhU0KjXR/view?usp=sharing) to learn more!

**Ways You Can Help!**

* Add your name to our [Community Support Letter](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Y5v2T3Wbr6IBVqoCUewpXKBkr7txnwD9/view?usp=sharing)!
* Testify at the public hearing VIRTUALLY OR IN PERSON Monday, 3/17 starting at 10:00 am
  + You must register [HERE](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hNi5LeC-S_KgJEc6MHZxPw#/registration) to testify. **The deadline to register is 3:00 pm on Sunday, March 16.**
  + Check out our [What to Expect](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M9MAj_PZMBwvVy89n6_PpCXEj9hDq37caPgglzbiWCI/edit?tab=t.0) after registering to testify in-person or virtually for logistics such as hearing location.
* **📝** Submit WRITTEN testimony using the [Testimony Template](#xp4z65yk47t8) below! **👇👇**
  + There is no deadline, but if possible, please submit before the hearing.

**Testimony Template Instructions**:

* Use this as a starting point, and put it in your own words!
* Copy the text into a new document;
* Replace and erase anything in **PURPLE**.
* Your testimony will be PUBLICLY AVAILABLE on the legislature’s website. Do not include any information that you want to keep private.

**📝**After you have completed writing your testimony, submit [HERE](https://www.cga.ct.gov/aspx/CGATestimonySub/CGAtestimonysubmission.aspx?comm_code=jud).

**👇👇**Use our **Testimony Template (NEXT PAGE)** to write your testimony **👇👇**

**TESTIMONY ON SB 1502**

**Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (DVSJA)**

**Joint Committee on Judiciary**

**Legislative Office Building, Room 2C**

**Hartford, CT 06106**

**IN SUPPORT**

Dear Co-Chair Winfield, Co-Chair Staffstrom, Vice Chair Flexer, Vice Chair Gadkar-Wilcox, Vice Chair Fazzino, and Esteemed Members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary,

I, [YOUR NAME], am writing to express my support for SB 1502, a crucial act that would allow **survivors of domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, and/or trafficking** who were incarcerated as a result of actions related to their abuse an opportunity for sentence modification, parole, or commutation hearings. It would also allow judicial discretion for future cases that would otherwise require a mandatory minimum sentence be applied.

As a [community member in District X/ staff of XX organization/ impacted family member/ previously incarcerated person, etc.], I believe the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (DVSJA) is essential.

[Here, add your personal connection to this issue. Share your second chance story, or explain how this would affect your family member or the clients you serve, highlighting why this change is necessary.]

If you have previously or currently been incarcerated: *My experience with (1) serving a sentence as a survivor of domestic violence myself or (2) being incarcerated alongside individuals who were serving a sentence related to domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, or trafficking has shown me [provide relevant stories that reflect your change and rehabilitation, or share instances where a person serving LWOP assisted in your transformation].*

**PICK 1-2 from below - NOT All! -** I believe this legislation is important because ***[pick 1-2 - NOT ALL! - of the following and expand on it using your own words to make it unique to your voice]*:**

* A growing body of evidence has consistently found that domestic violence is a risk factor for incarceration and the vast majority of incarcerated women (about 75%) have experienced domestic violence during their adulthood. In fact, a 2024 in-depth survey by Stanford University’s Criminal Justice Center of two large women’s prisons found that 74% of the people there had experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in the year prior to their offense. *Of those who experienced IPV, 66% were found to have been in extreme danger of being killed by their partner and 60 percent had a partner who choked or strangled them.*[[1]](#footnote-1) DVSJA increases the opportunity for the judicial system to be responsive to the circumstances in which an offense has occurred.
* In Connecticut, more than 70+ crimes carry mandatory minimum sentences and many of these apply regardless of the circumstance of the crime. This policy tends to minimize or even negate the role that domestic violence can play in women’s offenses. The DVSJA would provide the judicial discretion to adapt sentencing to the survivor’s unique circumstances.
* DVSJA will make Connecticut law more aligned with the lived experiences of survivors by recognizing that there are a number of reasons why a person’s experiences of survivorship may be minimized or obscured within the criminal justice system including:
* Defense attorneys will sometimes recommend that defenders refrain from bringing up experiences of domestic violence in court, either because they believe it will not be received well or because they see it as difficult to prove.
* Survivors may fear retaliation against their family members if they speak of the abuse, causing them to refrain from making the court aware of the role domestic violence played in the offense. Still others fear their family will be deported or their children taken into state custody if they reveal the extent of the abuse.
* High rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) amongst survivors may mean that it takes a survivor months, even years to recover from the trauma of the abuse and communicate their story effectively.
* There are cases where survivors did not understand that their experience was one of domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, or trafficking, especially if they grew up in a home where this type of behavior was normalized.

The DVSJA ensures that the unique and complex experiences of domestic violence survivors are being taken into consideration. It also ensures that Connecticut’s laws continue to keep pace with our evolving understanding of domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, and trafficking.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to vote favorably on SB 1502. I appreciate your time and consideration of this vital legislation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[First & Last Name]

1. Publications. (n.d.). *Fatal peril: Unheard stories from the IPV-to-prison pipeline*. Stanford Law School. https://law.stanford.edu/publications/fatal-peril-unheard-stories-from-the-ipv-to-prison-pipeline/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)