



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shirley L. Huntley

Domestic Violence

SHIRLEY L. HUNTLEY April 13, 2011

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News From New York State

Senator Shirley L. Huntley

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Contact: Antonio Rodriguez | arodrigu@nysenate.gov | (518) 455-3531

Press Release

Senate passes legislation to protect privacy of domestic violence survivors

Senator Shirley L. Huntley (D-Jamaica) announced passage of legislation (S. 1031B) that will enhance domestic violence survivors' safety by requiring insurers to provide them with alternative contact information which protects their privacy and ensures correspondence is received at a safe location free from the fear of attack.

In New York State, the statistics show cases of domestic violence have become an epidemic. Each year, approximately 400,000 domestic incidents are reported to police departments.

New York City has been proactive in providing increased protections, services, and educational awareness about Domestic Violence. 2,208 domestic violence emergency shelter beds are currently in the system, a 35% increase since 2002. In Queens County, The New York

City Family Justice Center has seen 23,901 client visits since it opened in July of 2008. The privacy of these clients would be enhanced by this bill and they could continue seeking services for them and their children without fear for their safety.

“This legislation will help provide a sense of security, privacy and support for survivors of domestic violence by allowing them to preserve their identity and prevent their abuser from easily tracking down their new contact information,” Senator Huntley said. “Confidentiality is vital, and I am proud this bill will provide survivors with some of the assistance they need.”

Many individuals living in abusive situations often forego seeking necessary treatment if their privacy cannot be assured. This also occurs with those who have left an abusive environment, as they fear that claim and billing correspondence will reveal their location to their abusers. The bill passed by the Senate will give victims of domestic violence, and their dependent children, the opportunity to designate alternative contact information so they can receive such correspondence in a safe location of their choosing.

Unfortunately, it appears incidences of domestic violence have increased in recent years, possibly in connection with the downturn of the national economy. The 2008 domestic violence statistics are significantly higher across the board than those from 2007; intimate partner homicides increased 25-percent statewide and 45-percent in counties outside of New York City. The state’s 31 domestic violence courts handled more than 31,000 cases in 2008, an increase of nearly 7,000 from the year prior.

This bill is awaiting action in the Assembly.