



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Stewart-Cousins Supports Important Legislation to Protect Victims of Domestic Violence

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS October 15, 2015

| ISSUE: **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**Yonkers, NY** - During this month of October, designated as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, the Senate Democratic Leader, expressed her steadfast support for legislation that protects victims of domestic violence.

“We have a responsibility to address the devastating impact domestic violence has on intimate partners and families, and we must do all we can to assist domestic violence survivors as they break free of the cycle of violence and move forward with their lives,” Senator Stewart-Cousins said. “It starts with awareness in our communities and a willingness to reach out to friends, family, and neighbors to let them know that help is available and that they don’t have to go it alone.”

The statistics are troubling. One in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime, according to the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control. In New York State, more than 280,000 calls were made to domestic violence and sexual assault hotlines in 2014, and courts recorded 202,000 orders of protection entered in the Domestic Violence Registry. In Westchester County, in 2014, the District Attorney’s Office investigated 2,647 cases of domestic violence. Yet, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that 70% of domestic violence or intimate partner assaults go unreported.

It is not only the victims of domestic violence who can suffer in silence by not seeking assistance. Children who witness violence in the home, including its aftermath, can suffer severe emotional and developmental challenges that are similar to those who have been abused directly.

The state provides assistance for those willing to take the necessary steps to leave a violent home life through the Office of Domestic Violence Prevention.

As part of Senator Stewart-Cousins' commitment to aiding the survivors of domestic violence, the Senator has supported legislation that will:

**Prohibit Housing Discrimination Against Victims Of Domestic Violence.** Legislation was passed by both the Senate and Assembly this year that prohibits housing discrimination against victims of domestic violence. Those affected by domestic violence have already suffered tremendous trauma and this initiative will prevent further trauma from occurring. In addition to preventing housing discrimination, this bill prohibits landlords from evicting the tenants solely based on their domestic violence victim status.

**Allow Domestic Violence Victims to Cancel Contracts.** Legislation has been introduced that will allow those impacted by domestic violence, who have sought and received a permanent order of protection, and are under a multi-year contract for phone, cable or bundle services, to break the contract without penalty. Early termination fees charged by residential service providers often impose hardships on survivors of domestic violence at times when their personal funds are severely limited, and are desperately needed to increase their safety and combat their abusers. This legislation is a common sense way to remove an additional, often overlooked, hardship faced by victims of domestic violence.

Require Translation of Domestic Violence Complaints. Legislation has been sponsored that will require state and local law enforcement put procedures in place for translation of complaints and notifications into languages other than English to ensure that no survivor of domestic violence is denied access to justice. Under current law, police can receive a domestic violence incident report but decline to initiate an investigation because the report was not filed in English. New Americans, non-native speakers and recent immigrants, already at higher risk, are further endangered under the current law.

Prohibit Workplace Discrimination Against Victims of Domestic Violence. An initiative has been introduced that will prohibit workplace discrimination against New Yorkers impacted by domestic violence. This legislation will require employers to provide reasonable, alternative accommodations for the survivors of domestic violence. If an employee must seek medical attention, rely on services from a shelter or crisis center and/or participate in counseling, they should not also have to worry about losing their jobs due to these traumatic circumstances.

“There is no place for domestic violence in the State of New York,” Senator Stewart-Cousins said. “I remain committed to working with my colleagues in the Legislature, the Governor, and law enforcement to stamp out domestic violence and help survivors and their families get the services and protections they need and deserve.”

For more information and resources to combat domestic violence, please visit:

<http://www.opdv.ny.gov/index.html>

<http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/index.html>

<http://nyscasa.org/>

<http://www.nsvrc.org/>