

House Bill 1
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Domestic Violence Offender Drug and Alcohol Usage

Victims already do not get the justice they deserve, as many abusers walk away with misdemeanors or no jail time. According to Johnsen and Robertson, many offenders receive little to no jail time or reduced sentences with little to no follow-through regarding orders for anger management or counseling services (2016). In addition, many cases of domestic violence go unreported and lessening the charges an offender may receive may make victims less likely to report abuse or come forward which results in victims not getting the assistance they desperately need (Voce & Boxall, 2018). This increases the risk for fatalities associated with domestic violence and places victims at the greatest risk for being murdered, raped, and for permanent physical damage. A very large percentage of intimate partner violence goes unreported in the United States involving serious injuries, minor injuries, and even those without injury (FBI, 2017). Research has shown that a large percentage of reported domestic violence incidence involve the use of drugs or alcohol (Scott & Kunselman, 2007). Failing to properly address and convict violent criminals could cause many victims to come forward, place them at a higher risk for being assaulted or harmed again, and prevent victims from obtaining the proper protection necessary to keep them safe. It is imperative that violent offenders receive the proper punishment for their crimes especially those involving drugs and/or alcohol.

Domestic violence lasts a life-time as victims often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and can struggle psychologically due to the trauma they experienced at the hands of an abuser. Women who were victims of domestic violence are at a much greater risk for depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance-abuse related disorders, and heart disease as compared to the general population (Wright, Hanlon, Lozano, & Teitelman). Just as the victims have to potentially suffer for the remainder of the lives for a crime they did not

commit, abusers should also have to have a permanent record that demonstrates a history of violence and their potential to become violent again in the future. Riedl, Beck, Exenberger, Daniels, Dejaco, Unterberger, and Lampe Found that: “CV was found for 38% and DV for 16% of participants. A significantly higher occurrence of physical disease was observed in patients with poly-victimization,” (2019). When an abuser has a record it can help keep others safe from harm as this is shown on their record and potential spouses and significant others can be made aware of their history prior to engaging in an intimate relationship with a simple background check. It can also assist employers on making decisions regarding who can care for patients, families, or children in which is important in protecting the public.

A history of violence is the number one indicator of potential for future violence and abuse. “Offenders with a history of domestic violence-particularly more frequent offending-and of breaching violence orders were more likely to reoffend. Most importantly, the risk of reoffending was cumulative, increasing with each subsequent incident,” (Morgan, Boxall, & Brown, 2018). More than 10 million men and women will be victims of domestic violence, and 1 in 15 children will be exposed to it in the United States (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2019). If it were not a person who was in a relationship or a marriage the crime and punishment would be much more severe, yet it seems this is not being recognized and victims are being placed at an even greater risk then before.

As a victim of domestic violence I first experienced the physical abuse when he was intoxicated while I was pregnant with our first-born son. He grabbed by the neck and choked me while I was carrying my son. He was often violent when intoxicated on a regular basis, then as time went on and he became more comfortable he started beating me when sober. The beatings included regular chokings, sexual assaults, whippings with a belt and other objects from around

the home, stabbings involving a large grilling fork, and being pushed down the steps on multiple occasions. I did not report it because of fear of what would happen to me or my children, and his abuse was also financial limiting me to funds and what I had access to. If I went to the store I was called names like “whore,” “slut,” and “cunt.” For years I began to start believing my name was “cunt” because it was what I was called on a regular basis. The last incident occurred on a holiday and resulted in me being seriously injured, I was lifted off the ground by my neck and slammed head first into a wall. He received no jail time and a misdemeanor, had he been a stranger then he might have been charged with attempted murder. However, since we were married he received no jail time and is allowed visitation with our two young children. I live in fear every day and worry about my children and how this has negatively impacted them. The system does not recognize the psychological impact simply witnessing abuse as a child can have, children who witness abuse are at a greater risk for psychological disorders and for repeating the cycle themselves (Spencer, Mallory, Cafferky, Kimmes, Beck, & Stith, 2019). Simply witnessing abuse is it’s own type of abuse as children are traumatized for life and suffer just as the victim suffers. Victims and their children have a right not to be injured, harmed, and most importantly a right to justice.

I still have not eaten solid food since December 25th, 2018.

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