

House Business and Labor Committee:

As the leader of the west coast's oldest domestic violence shelter, I urge you to support HB 2903 to close a gap in protection for victims of domestic violence who need to take reasonable unpaid time off work to seek safety.

At Bradley Angle we assist 400-500 individuals and families each year recover from the destabilizing effects of domestic violence. We know that many victims don't seek the protection that they need for fear of being fired for leaving work. We also know that economic independence is a primary indicator of whether a victim will be able to become free and stay free from abuse.

Unfortunately, victims of domestic violence are sometimes unable to seek the protection they need for fear of being fired for leaving work; and if they lose their jobs, their safety is jeopardized because they may stay or return to abusive situations.

Domestic violence poses serious public health and safety issues, and can even be fatal. When a victim needs to take steps to stay safe, it is critical that she or he not delay. Many of the systems and providers to assist her seek safety – law enforcement, courts, attorneys, and medical providers – only schedule appointments during business hours, which means that victims must take time off from work in order to access these services.

A victim's ability to leave work to address critical needs may be the difference between them getting help and staying safe, or not.

HB 2903 would close a gap in protections to allow *all* victims of domestic violence the right to take reasonable time off if necessary to seek court or law enforcement protection, medical care, or other safety measures. **Under current law, part-time and new employees do not qualify for protection, leaving some employees who are victims vulnerable to safety threats and posing a risk to the workplace as a whole.**

Domestic violence can happen to anyone and at any time, regardless of employment status. All victims need to be able to access services to stay safe. Please support HB 2903.

Sincerely,
Deborah Steinkopf

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Deborah Steinkopf, MSW, MA
Executive Director