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Date: March 25th, 2015
To: Chair Prozanski and Committee Members
Senate Committee on Judiciary
From: Carla C. Piluso, Representative, HD-50
Regarding: SB 526

I have joined my colleagues, Senator Monnes Anderson and Senator Winters to Chief Sponsor SB 526 and I urge your support.

I have a long history of law enforcement service, including serving as Chief. This experience brings officers face-to-face with a lot of hard facts. One of those facts, is that far too many individuals—primarily women—and their children are put in danger, are seriously injured, and far too often murdered at the hands of their intimate partner.

SB 526 takes important steps within the criminal justice system to further protections for victims of domestic violence. Increasing the penalties to the level of a felony for the crime of strangulation should happen across the board, and it makes sense that we begin with pregnant women. Pregnant women are especially vulnerable to domestic violence and at a higher risk for lethality when they experience abuse.

Additionally, when abuse occurs in a home where children are present, we all know that children are negatively affected by that violence. Too many children are caught in a home environment marked by the threat of harm, feelings of tension and of fear, and the truly unfortunate idea that violence is an okay way to solve problems and to get power. Children are victims of abuse, regardless of whether or not they are physically touched. Under current law, when children witness violence, that crime is automatically considered a felony, this bill would additionally name that child a victim in the case which allows greater protections for that child under the law and speaks to the totality of the harm the perpetrator of violence has caused. Another important part of this bill is the increased “teeth” it gives to protective orders. Too many perpetrators do not fear violating a protective order. They know, it often is a contempt of court violation, maybe an overnight in jail, and limited punishment when they are in front of a judge. Classifying it a Class A misdemeanor takes step toward acknowledging the seriousness of these violations and the risk the perpetrator is to the victim and the children.

This is good, common sense legislation, that helps the law to back up what we know about the dangers of abusers and works toward providing better protections for victims. I urge your support for SB 526.

Sincerely,

Carla C. Piluso
Representative, HD-50