



Support for Survivors of Domestic and/or Sexual Violence

February 13, 2017

Dear Senate Finance Committee Members:

My name is Julie Olson and I have been the Executive Director of Advocate Safehouse Project for 22 years. Advocate Safehouse Project provides comprehensive and confidential services to victims of domestic and/or sexual violence throughout Garfield County in western Colorado. This includes women's support groups, individual supportive and therapeutic counseling, an emergency shelter program, case management, client education, advocacy, information & referral, and community education.

In 2016, Advocate Safehouse Project provided services to 477 victims of domestic and/or sexual violence. Now for some of you that may not seem like very many victims compared to Front Range programs, but without Advocate Safehouse Project in Garfield County that means 477 victims would not have received any services for their victimization ... which was not caused by them. Additionally, Advocate Safehouse Project provided 41 victims (20 families with 21 children) over 2,020 nights of emergency shelter due to their victimization.

For the first time in 22 years I am very concerned about adequate funding for domestic and sexual violence victims because of our current Administration's stance on women's issues. In addition to having to "fight" for the continuation of federal funding, I am now aware that this fight is now localized throughout Colorado with SB 54.

The Domestic Abuse Fund has been a sustainable fund especially for rural domestic violence programs since 1985 and for Advocate Safehouse Project since it opened its doors in 1987. Rural Colorado has always had a more difficult time raising funds for our domestic and sexual violence programs due to larger geographic areas to cover, fewer people to raise funds from, and competition from other nonprofits asking the same people for limited funds. I speak not only from my own experience, but of all Colorado rural programs that a 5% cut in Domestic Abuse Funds on an annual basis can be the difference of whether or not a rural program has funds to pay their program rent, phone bills, ... the basic needs for providing services to rural victims.

On a personal level my husband and I support the Domestic Abuse Fund Checkoff ... because it's easy and I know that it support victims who need help to stabilize their lives after the domestic violence in their lives.

Please either take the Domestic Abuse Fund off the Checkoff rotation schedule or just cancel SB 54 altogether. Let the citizens of Colorado choose if they want to support a Checkoff fund or not. If they do, then let the citizens of Colorado choose which fund they want to support ... not SB 54. Please do not limit the Checkoff choices.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 970-928-2070 or [julie@advocatesafehouse.org](mailto:julie@advocatesafehouse.org).

Thank you.

Julie Olson, MSW  
Executive Director