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Temporary Assistance for Domestic Crisis

2915 W. Charleston, Ste. 12  
Las Vegas, NV 89102

**Mary Lou Fineman**  
**VICTIM ADVOCATE**  
**877-0133 Ext. 237**

*"Domestic Violence Experts for over 20 Years"*

1 of 5

ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY

DATE: 5/1/03 ROOM: 3138 EXHIBIT H

SUBMITTED BY: Marylou Fineman



## Temporary Assistance for Domestic Crisis, Inc.

March 14, 2003

Nevada State Senate  
Legislative Building  
Carson City, Nevada 89710

Re: SB 224  
Support Person in Courtroom

### Members of the Senate:

I am a Domestic Violence Victim Advocate with Safe Nest.  
I have been with Safe Nest for 3.5 years.

A part of my work with victims includes court  
accompaniment for protection order hearings, divorce  
hearings and custody cases.

Any court proceeding is intimidating to a lay person. This  
intimidation increases dramatically when the opposing  
person is your batterer. The dynamics of power and control  
are in play. The batterer is usually better off financially  
than the victim and will be able to hire an attorney, further  
increasing the intimidation factor.

I have accompanied hundreds of victims to their court  
proceedings, and 100% of the victims were grateful to  
have this support. Even victims who are able to retain an  
attorney seem to need this additional support. A person  
there only to be on your side is invaluable.

I urge you to support SB 224.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Fineman  
Victim Advocate

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2915 W. Charleston, Suite 12 • Las Vegas, NV 89102

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A United Way Agency

To: Judiciary Committee  
Nevada Senate

From: Valoree Howard, Senior Child Protective Services Specialist  
701 N. Pecos, Las Vegas, Nevada 89101  
702-455-0749

Re: Senate Bill 224 (Support Person in the Court Room)

I am writing to express my support for the bill which will allow victims of domestic violence to have a support person accompany them in all court proceedings. I have worked with victims of domestic violence for eighteen years and believe this is essential to victims being heard by the court. Victims of domestic violence have learned to fear the abuser's threats that their victimization will not be believed. They frequently cut themselves off from family and friends and ultimately the system which is designed to protect them. When these victims finally come forward and ask for protection, it is important they realize they are supported and are not alone. Victims are afraid to face their abuser and are helped by the presence of an advocate in court. They are often then able to explain their victimization to the court which ultimately leads to batterers being held accountable for their behavior and to the safety of the victims and their children..

The majority of my experience working with victims of domestic violence has been within the child protection system. I recently worked as an investigator in a Child Protection Domestic Violence Unit for Clark County, Nevada. All victims of domestic violence were given the opportunity to have a domestic violence advocate provide them support. This support frequently included accompanying them to court. This advocacy had a positive impact on the safety of victims and their children.

Although I feel domestic violence advocates can provide victims with the best advocacy, I also feel victims should be allowed to have other support people accompany them to court if they so desire.

Thank you for your consideration in the very important matter. Please contact me if I can provide any additional information or answer any question regarding my positive experiences working with domestic violence advocates.

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# Department of Family Services

## Child Protective Services

701 N Pecos Rd • Las Vegas NV 89101-2411  
(702) 455-5401 • Fax (702) 455-5479

Susan Klein-Rothschild, Director • Joy L. Salmon, Assistant Director • Carol Stillian, Manager • Ann Rubin, Assistant Manager

3 March 2003

Judiciary Committee of Nevada State

Re: SB 224

attn: In Support Person

TO Whom This May Concern:

Hi, my name is Lisa Ford, Jr. Child Protective Services Specialist with Dept. of Family Services in Clark County, Nevada.

I was involved with the Domestic Violence Unit of Child Protective Services for three years, and I continue to advocate for the victims of domestic violence. I have had many opportunities to work with Safe Nest + Safe Haven Domestic Violence advocates. The advocates provide a wonderful support system to the victims. The victims need to have their advocate in all court proceedings. This allows the advocates to continue to validate the victim's worthiness as a person. The advocates presence in the courtroom helps to empower the victim, so the victim is not alone. The advocates presence will remind judges that there is truth to her story and she needs to be provided

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the same respect as the perpetrator and the perpetrator's lawyer.

When the advocates are assigned their cases, they explain to the victim that someone does believe their story, and the best way for the advocate to show the victim, is to attend every court hearing with that victim. Otherwise, it is meaningless to have domestic violence advocates because we are going backwards in time, where the victims had no rights because there were no victims.

Let's continue to go forward and allow the victims to have their domestic violence advocate with them, in every court proceeding.

Sincerely,

Lisa Ford

Sr. Child Protective Services Specialist

(702) 455-7217



Department of Family Services

**Lisa Ford**

Senior Child Protective Services Specialist

601 N Pecos Rd  
Las Vegas NV 89101-2408  
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