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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.

ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY

DATE: 5/1/03 ROOM: 3138 EXHIBIT 2

SUBMITTED BY: Valoree Howard