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# memo

Date : March 13, 2003  
To : JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
From : Mandi Zambai  
RE : BILL 224 - SUPPORT PERSON IN COURT ROOM

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Dear Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in support of the Bill number 224 relative to having a support person present in the court room.

Having been the victim of domestic violence, I can speak of the importance of having a support system by your side. Briefly, I was in an abusive relationship with my child's father for four years. When I finally made the decision to leave the relationship and obtain help for myself and my daughter, I found the assistance and support of the Safe Nest. Without this support, I would inevitably have found myself back in the same relationship and possibly not be here today to support this very important bill.

Having to appear in court was a very difficult and frightening experience. Appearing twice without an attorney and three times with an attorney, my advocate was there beside me EVERY time. Lawyers and advocates/support persons each serve a specific purpose to the VICTIM. The attorney is there to take care of all of the "legal" aspects of each issue. Our advocate/support person is there to help us deal with our emotions, and our general well-being.

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Confidential

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Our thoughts and what we know is "right" in our heads doesn't always connect with what we are feeling. That is where the support of another person standing by our sides telling us "You are doing the right thing", holding our hands, talking to us...just supporting us in every way is so very, very important. Without that support, it is too easy to "give in", decide not to testify against the perpetrators and again, without a doubt, be right back in the exact situation I was trying to get out of.

In conclusion, I support this bill 100% and I hope that you too, will see the importance of having a support system by the side of each and every victim of domestic violence. Thousands of people are dedicating their lives to fight domestic violence and this bill is yet another step in continuing this effort.

Thank you for your time...please support bill number 224.

Very truly yours,

*Mandi M. Zambai*

Mandi M. Zambai



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## 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 10 years experience working with victims of violence. Part of my duties includes court accompaniment with victims. The majority of these victims would have no support if not for the advocate.

Often in divorce and custody proceedings an abuser or his /her attorney will request the judge to close the courtroom, leaving an already frightened victim totally alone.

Because of this I urge you to please support SB224.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Trudy Burke-Creazzo  
Victim Advocate

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



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## 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

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

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My name is Mary Terzian and I am a client advocate at Safe Nest. Many times I have gone to court with a victim, and the abuser, who has had emotional control over her for many years will try to intimidate her or alter her behavior. He will glare at her to keep her quiet or cry and look passively at her to make her feel guilty. As an advocate I can point out those behaviors and sometimes all the victim needs is someone on her side to give her the strength to advocate for herself.

As an example, I went to divorce court with a woman who had been severely battered for over 10 years. The batterer's attorney asked for a closed hearing and I was asked to leave the courtroom. The judge set up temporary custody and visitation. At the time, she was living in a transitional housing apartment for battered women. The judge ordered that the abuser could pick the children up that night at her apartment. That night he battered her and she lost her housing because he knew where it was. If I had been allowed to remain in the courtroom I would have been able to point out how dangerous it was for the abuser to pick the children up at her apartment, and maybe she would not have been battered and lost her housing.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony.

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 Stiffan, 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 the 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 the 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 advocates with them, in every court proceeding.

Sincerely,

Lisa Ford

Sr. Child Protective Services Specialist

(702) 455-7217

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Department of Family Services



**Lisa Ford**

Senior Child Protective Services Specialist

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