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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB1070

I am a 75 year-old adult child of domestic abuse. My aunt tearfully recalls picking up Mom (5' 2" and 100 lbs) on the "highway" on several occasions in the 1940's, as she fled for her life. My aunt remembers seeing the bruises, blood, broken bones, and other imprints of my dad's abuse on my mother's tiny body. After Mom died in 2002, I happened to ask my aunt why Mom had always gone back to dad, and she said because she had 4 children who might be killed if she didn't. One night when he wasn't home in 1950, the 5 of us escaped by train, and with help from my grandparents we never went back. If my mom had the means, she might have killed my dad when he was in one of his drunken rages. I think often, "there but for fortune, go you and I." If Mom had fought back, she might have been arrested and our only defender would have been taken from us as we'd have been separated in different foster homes. The trauma of those first 5 years with Dad left indelible marks on the psyches of me and my siblings. But at least we had our loving mother. She would have been fully justified to buy a gun and use it the next time my dad went on a rampage. She didn't, and so we all survived through luck and an extended family that supported my mom's escape.

Before Mom died, I told her that all my rantings about being abandoned were perhaps short-sighted (we had to live with my grandparents while she found work in another city, and my brothers were in a "children's home"), until after 5 years, we were all reunited. I finally realized just before Mom died, that it could have been worse. I told her "thank you" for saving our lives, even though we were scarred from the abuse and the abandonment. We could have, most likely would have, been killed by our father. Both my older brothers suffered break-your-heart memories of being toddlers in a hell of abuse. One memory of my dad hitting me out of my high chair onto the floor at about a year old especially haunted my brother Charles, who until his death in 2021 would cry thinking about it. And, by the way, Charles died in a drunken stupor having accidentally started a fire which killed him as he slept, unaware of his cigarette still burning. Tortured flashbacks of being treated as disposable preceded years of addiction which brought his life to an end.

So the good news? It really COULD have been worse! We survived, which was mom's only objective on that dark and scary night with cash from my grandfather to buy our train tickets. I don't know if I could have had the strength, especially in 1950's America with no welfare to rely on, to wrangle 4 little kids to the train (seems like a huge feat, even if you didn't have a monster about to show up and kill you!)...and give us a fighting chance.

So please, pass SB 1070 which will allow context to the brave women who choose their children or themselves over the abuser. What woman (or man) would EVER choose prison if it wasn't necessary to save lives? The greater evil would have been to keep going back, as my mom did so many times. Without family support, she'd have had no other choice but to stay and wait for a violent end. We were lucky. But let's take luck out of the equation, can we? Let's ask ourselves "what would I do?" if I was in that situation? No doubt in my mind that I would resort to murder if I witnessed someone trying to murder my children!! It is very very wrong, and uninformed, to sentence a person without the circumstances preceding the murder to be considered! Self-defense and defense of children needs to be redefined as a sometimes noble action! After all, we condone murder in war, so what's the difference? Let's give women and children a fighting chance, and not see another 75 years without recourse for the true perpetrators. Thank you.