

Submitter: Lisa Jones
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB710

Dear Chair Prozanski and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Lisa Jones, and I am a survivor of domestic violence, a mother, and a passionate advocate for change. I serve on the VOICES survivor committee of the Family Justice Center of Washington County, where I work alongside other survivors to improve support systems and advocate for policies that protect those affected by domestic violence and sexual assault.

I urge you to pass Senate Bill 710, which will require mandatory domestic violence and sexual assault education for all judges and court staff.

My experience in the family court system was not one of protection but of further harm. Instead of being recognized as a survivor, I was treated as a perpetrator, forced to defend myself against assumptions while my abuser remained unaccountable. The biases and lack of trauma- and abuse-informed understanding in our court system led to devastating consequences—not just for me, but for my children.

??When my mother, who was my strongest support and my designated safety service provider, passed away, my children were suddenly taken from me based on uninvestigated assumptions—not facts. They were placed in a system that overlooked the real trauma we had endured. My young son was separated from me for months, and when he returned, he was no longer the joyful child I had once known. He was later diagnosed with complex PTSD—a direct result of the court's decisions.

This is why we must support this bill for universal domestic violence and sexual assault education for judges and court staff. Too often, survivors are met with skepticism instead of support. In my experience, without this education, courts rely on outdated myths, personal biases, and incomplete CPS reports rather than understanding the realities of abuse and trauma.

At the core of this issue is a simple truth: we need to believe survivors. When we fail to do so, we allow injustice to continue, retraumatizing those who have already suffered. Believing survivors means making informed decisions based on facts, not assumptions. It means recognizing that domestic violence does not always look the way we expect and that the legal system should not punish people for surviving.

With the training proposed in this bill, judges and court staff could better recognize the nuances of trauma, the power dynamics in abusive relationships, and the ways the system itself retraumatizes survivors. They could make informed, just decisions that prioritize safety and healing rather than perpetuating harm.

I urge you to support SB 710 to ensure that our courts do not continue to fail survivors like myself and my children. Judges have immense power over our lives—let's make sure they are trained to use it responsibly.

Thank you.