

House Judiciary Committee  
SB 304  
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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of SB 304, concerning the certification of batterer intervention programs in our State. I have been serving in some capacity in BIP programs for the last 18 years. I currently direct the Family Peace Initiative BIP program at the Center for Safety and Empowerment, a program of the YWCA here in Topeka.

There are many reasons why I would urge you to support this legislation. The most fundamental reason is that many batterers can change and victims can be safer if given the right intervention. Substandard programs that do little to effect change in those who batter, and can increase the danger for victims, are currently being widely used throughout our State. These programs are appealing for a number of reasons. They are easier for batterers to complete, they cost less money, and they require less skill to facilitate. However, there is little if any information to suggest that substandard interventions, like Anger Management for example, do anything to actually decrease domestic violence.

The Family Peace Initiative is a BIP program certified by the Attorney General's office. We recently examined 138 cases of people who have completed our program over the last 4 years. Among this group, an independent source determined that our recidivism rate is 12%. This rate is extremely low when examining comparable rates around the country. I believe that this rate is low due in large part to our program meeting and exceeding the minimum standards as established by the Attorney General office. Holding BIP programs to the expectation of a minimum standard is already making a difference in our State.

The status quo is unacceptable. It is not enough so send those convicted of domestic violence to counseling, anger management, or subject them to fines. The consequences for continuing to use ineffective approaches are far too serious. SB 304 will raise the bar for BIP programs across the State. Many people who batter can change and victims can be safer. You can raise this bar and make a difference by supporting this legislation.