Good Morning. I appreciate this opportunity to participate in this hearing today. I think the recitation of violence that we have all heard this morning is most disturbing. Governor Weld and I are grateful for all the help and support that the Women's Legislative Caucus has given us in the past several months in our efforts to address the epidemic of domestic violence in our state. As the Boston Globe this morning and others have indicated, there are no easy answers. But we want to make it clear today that our administration will continue to work with you, with the advocates and with the law enforcement community to do everything we can to break this cycle of violence which all too often escalates into murder.

I know today's hearing is focusing on what more we in state government or law enforcement can do to protect a woman when a restraining order simply isn't enough. But first, I think it's worthwhile to look at how far we've come in Massachusetts in changing the attitudes that all too often forced a woman who has already suffered at the hands of the abuser, to suffer again at the hands of an unresponsive criminal justice system.
We have made some headway in changing the perception that domestic violence is a "family matter" that "can be worked out when the woman cools down". thanks in large part to the work that all of you did in getting the abused persons act passed in 1990 and the extensive public education efforts that the Coalition for Battered Women's Service Groups, among others, have undertaken.

As you know, last July we issued police guidelines for implementation of the mandatory arrest law and I am pleased to report that we have received an overwhelming response from police departments across the state, 95 percent of whom have already adopted and are implementing our model guidelines in their ranks.

To aid these departments, last Fall more than 100 police trainers finished an intensive instructional program on the handling of domestic violence cases. These expert trainers have worked with departments across the state to ensure that each and every police officer understands that the victim's safety is the top priority and that any person who violates a restraining order must be arrested.

In January, we released the first pocket-sized domestic violence handbook for police which has the abused person's rights printed in ten languages.

The message we are sending to the state's police departments, to the public and to the batterer is clear. Domestic violence is a crime, just like any other act of violence, and it cannot and will not be tolerated in our state.
For too long, we’ve approached the problem of domestic violence from a treatment perspective rather than a public safety perspective. And while we recognize that many of today’s batterers grew up in abusive households -- and that outreach and education are essential -- we believe that the most effective way to break this cycle of violence that is passed like a legacy from generation to generation is to treat domestic violence cases like the serious crimes they are.

Governor Weld and I are proud that Massachusetts is the first state in the nation to include battering as a category in our guidelines for commutation. The Governor and I recognize that there is an inherent injustice in continuing to imprison a woman convicted of murder or manslaughter when she has had a long history of abuse and acted only in the defense of her own life.

The Advisory Board of Pardons is now reviewing 8 petitions for commutation under these new guidelines on an expedited basis and we hope and expect that where it is appropriate, justice will finally be done.

So clearly we have made progress. But we recognize that there is still much work to do. Last Tuesday, a 23-year old woman was gunned down on the steps of a police station in Fort Collins, Colorado by an ex-boyfriend who was barred by a restraining order from harassing her. And here in Massachusetts, tragic events in recent weeks also make it all too clear that sometimes a piece of paper just isn’t enough to stop those who are bent on destruction.
Again, there are no easy answers. But there are some things we can and must do. First, our Executive Office of Public Safety will continue to work with police departments all across the state to ensure that the current law and arrest guidelines are being followed.

Second, our administration will be proposing new sentencing guidelines focusing on serious crimes of violence and it is our intention to make the violation of a restraining order or a history of domestic abuse an aggravating factor that will significantly increase the penalties for these violent offenders. Simply put, you can't batter when you're behind bars.

Third, we urge the Legislature to pass the so-called "Stalker Law". This legislation truly complements our administration's support of stiff penalties and hard time behind bars for the perpetrators of domestic violence. Senator Jajuga should be commended for filing this bill, which also has the support of Attorney General Harshbarger, and we hope that the Legislature, with your help, acts quickly to get it on the Governor's desk.

And finally, we have to do all we can to ensure that a woman who escapes from a violent situation has a safe place to go. All too often, because she needs the financial support or simply does not have access to a safe place to stay, a woman will return to her abuser. State support for battered women's services was cut by the prior administration and in the past two years, it has been level funded. Today, I want to state our administration's commitment to
working with the Legislature to restore that funding so that help will be available to every woman who is a victim of domestic violence. In the budget we have sent to the Legislature, we have recommended $25 million for family preservation accounts and we want to work with the Legislature to ensure that some of these resources are applied to get battered women's funding back to the level where it should be.

I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this hearing today. We hope our joint efforts can wipe this stain of violence out of our state and Governor Weld and I look forward to working with you on this critical issue in the months ahead.