



Written Testimony in support of SB 64 (Zaffirini)

Senate Committee on Business and Commerce Hearing 02.22.11

The Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) thanks Chairman Corona and committee members for your attention and consideration of Senate Bill 64 by Senator Zaffirini. On behalf of TCFV and our more than 1,000 members including family violence shelter centers, allied professionals, survivors and concerned individuals, we respectfully register our support for SB 64.

Victims of serious violent crimes currently face genuine barriers in access to the courts as they pursue justice in their cases, because Texas statute does not provide these victims with explicit protected time off to attend court proceedings. Victims are fearful that they may lose their jobs or be penalized by their employer if they take the time needed to fully participate in the criminal and civil justice systems.

Although the Texas Legislature has supported victims of violent crimes and promoted public safety by enacting a comprehensive set of protections for survivors and accountability measures for perpetrators, victims nevertheless need the ability to fully access the criminal and civil justice systems. In order to do this, victims need the time off to avail themselves of remedies the court system offers.

TCFV realizes and appreciates the business community's challenges in continuing to make the Texas economy the envy of the country. But we also know that the cost of crime to employee productivity takes a heavy toll on workers across our state. Allowing an employee to find justice through full participation in the court process will ultimately lead to enhanced productivity and increased safety in the workplace. In providing leave for victims from work, Texas joins 34 other states that have crime victim job protection laws on the books.

TCFV will continue working with employers towards solutions that maintain a productive and profitable workforce in Texas while safeguarding crime victims' access to justice.

Obviously maintaining employment represents a critical concern, particularly for victims of serious violent crimes as they strive to regain stability following traumatic crisis. Victims of family violence often lose the financial support of their abusers when they flee and are left to raise their children on their own. Victims should not be made to choose between a job and justice.

Continuing in the tradition of the Texas Legislature to support victims of violence, we respectfully request members' support of Senate Bill 64 and ask that this Committee vote the bill favorably out of committee.

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