



Good afternoon Chairwoman and members of the committee, I am in favor of HB 121. I am a former victim of Teen Dating Abuse and now an active advocate. I am 18 years old and graduated in May of 2006 from James Bowie High School. I was in an abusive relationship three and a half years ago, now almost four, when I was 15 years old. I met my abuser at Crockett High School during summer school. We were both taking the same classes. Shortly after we met we started dating and labeled each other as boyfriend and girlfriend, meaning we were not allowed to date other people, we were a couple. The first week into the relationship he told me that he was the type of guy who liked a lot of physical attention, meaning playing with his hair, holding his hand, or scratching his back and that if he didn't get it from me, that he was going to get it from somebody else. From then on things gradually got worse, he started telling me what I should and should not wear, who I should and should not talk to, and things like that. He even demanded that I NOT do my homework on *his* time, but only on my time a lone, which was never. My grade point average dropped from high A's to Failing. He abused me mentally, verbally, and even physically. He always put me down and even eventually hit me. He forever damaged my right eye by damaging my tear duct. After my physical and verbal attack my abuser told me that if he didn't love me, he wouldn't have hit me. Even though he said this before I left his house that night, I still came to realize with something in side of me that what had happened was wrong, and so I told my parents. We followed up with a police report and then I went to my school for help. I learned about the Expect Respect program that SafePlace has to offer and so I tried it out. My first day I remember hearing a girl say that her abuser had told her that if he didn't love her he wouldn't have hit her, and so immediately I felt a connection and like I actually fit in somewhere. In the expect respect

program I learned all about healthy and unhealthy relationships and all the warning signs. I believe that it is important for HB 121 to be passed because I think it is important for teens and teachers to be educated on this topic and informed of information that is out there that they may not know about. I believe that HB 121 would have benefited me greatly in that I would have already been educated and known my resources available, and that's what I want to happen for teens today, and also for teachers to be able to recognize the signs when students who don't know don't see them.