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Hello. My name is Kristina Ricker, and I am in support of the current legislative topic of confidentiality existing between advocates and victims. I have been a crisis counselor and advocate for Safe Nest, TADC--Temporary Assistance for Domestic Crisis, for almost two years. The Safe Nest shelter for domestic violence victims is often a last resort for victims, and they reside in the shelter in fear of being found by their abusers. My court advocacy primarily pertains to temporary protective order, divorce, and custody hearings for shelter residents. The court room is an intimidating environment, and the presence of the victim's abuser only amplifies this frightening atmosphere. My role has previously consisted of giving emotional support and offering encouragement through the judicial process, and I often accompany another advocate whose primary purpose is to aid the victim with the legal matters at hand. Since most of these victims have not seen their abusers since the initial incident which prompted them to leave, fear and repressed feelings often reappear in this stressful setting. The bond of confidentiality between the victim and I is an element which produces safety and comfort in an intimidating atmosphere. If "confidentiality" did not exist, the relationship between victims and advocates would be strained and may actually do a disservice to the victim with additional worries over issues of trust and openness. On behalf of current and future victims of domestic violence, I ask that you protect a battered individual from being victimized over again throughout the legal system and support confidentiality between victims and advocates. Thank you for your time.

ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY
DATE: 3/10/03 ROOM: 3138 EXHIBIT V
SUBMITTED BY: KRISTINA RICKER