

**Testimony of Congreso de Latinos Unidos  
Before Philadelphia City Council**

Presented by: Lisa Cordeiro Kricun  
Vice Presiden, Health Prevention & Wellness

Philadelphia, PA  
[Date]

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Let me begin by thanking the Public Safety Committee of Philadelphia's City Council, and a special thanks to Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller, for your continued leadership and willingness to address the devastating impact and reality of domestic violence in our families and communities. I am Lisa Cordeiro Kricun, the VP for Health Promotion & Wellness at Congreso de Latinos Unidos, the division in which our domestic violence services reside. On behalf of Congreso de Latinos Unidos (Congreso), our customers, and the domestic violence provider community I am honored to speak to you today about domestic violence giving perhaps a new perspective as you discuss domestic violence three years after the hearings of 2002, and on the eve of the perhaps long overdue conference and attention on Missing Persons. However, let me preface my testimony by saying that while a missing person often may be indicative of domestic violence at its worst, we must remember that it may also represent a battered individual in hiding, one of the most extreme measures that millions of women take every year out of desperation. We must keep that in mind as we look for new approaches to missing persons and domestic violence.

Nevertheless, Congreso has served nearly 5,000 women, men and child victims of domestic violence since our last testimonies before City Council on a small budget of less than \$500,000, in the context of 30,000 served through Congreso and our sister organizations, Women In Transition, Women Against Abuse and Lutheran Settlement House. We have spent many hours over the last year working hard to launch the new City-wide hotline for victims of domestic violence that I am happy to say is alive and

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well at 866-SAFE-014. But I must also take this opportunity to say that the dollars most graciously allocated by the City of Philadelphia as a result of these initial hearings meets only 1/3 of the budget required for this line based on call volume and demand for interpretation experienced in just one short month of operation. Additionally, Congreso has experienced a tremendous increase in walk-in clients in the past few weeks as a result of the additional publicity done for the hotline. The Philadelphia Domestic Violence Coalition is working hard to quickly raise additional funds to adequately meet the presenting demand. We welcome continued support and leadership from this Committee in so doing.

I have chosen to speak to you today on behalf of the millions of children who witness violence in their home every year in Philadelphia alone. These silent victims bare the scars of trauma at the most intimate level that most often lead directly to mental health problems that plague our juvenile justice system, our medical system, our school system, and our behavioral health system, and that often result in perpetrating violence and domestic violence later in their adult life. Congreso has served these children with clinical services since 1996 and sees first hand the impact of a grossly underfunded social problem and population.

In our most recent pre and adolescent support group for these children, every child shared their thoughts and intentions around suicide in that safe and supportive environment, as well as their shame, guilt, blame and anger. Nearly one hundred children last year shared

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with our anti-bullying educator the reality of domestic and family violence in their home through our bulling prevention program at Hunter Elementary School. Through both of these programs Congreso served over 400 children last year creatively with extremely modest funds and the support of student interns and Americorps.

If we seek to increase funds in just one area alone this year it is perhaps most vital in services to the children who are poised to repeat the cycle. There is tremendous cost-effective potential in model programs recognized throughout the country. I urge you today to consider new resources for this most vulnerable population.

While my testimony has focused on the children, I've neglected to tell you about the tremendous need for legal advocacy and justice for those victimized by their abuser, and then again by the system with a lack of legal representation, language interpretation, and often belief in their physical and emotional scars. I've also neglected to tell you about the clinical services needed for many women suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and the impact that systemic injustice in the legal and medical community has on their level of functioning. And I've neglected to tell you about our wishes for support in helping the Latina matriarch of the family who desperately wants help for her abusive husband and father of her children so that the abuse will just stop. But this is perhaps for another day. I would need to further understand this...let's chat for a few minutes about this.

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Again, on behalf of Congreso and its stakeholders, thank you for this opportunity as we, and our partner organizations look forward to remaining a resource for the City of Philadelphia in seeking new ways to address the issue of domestic violence, and perhaps in the context of missing persons. Is it about missing persons or not?

Let's chat a bit about the whole thing to make sure that I am giving you good feedback. IU don't know what this is for or what the general context of things is THIS IS GREAT though! Please check the header information to make sure that it is correct.