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Over 100 Domestic Violence Survivors and Advocates Converge on State Capitol to STOP Proposed Program Cuts, Advocate for Justice

Camille Hayes
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When domestic violence victims rebuild their lives after leaving abusive relationships, they must not only see to the basics like housing, childcare and employment, they also must begin to heal their emotional wounds. Many survivors say that a powerful way to do that is by sharing their stories. With this in mind, the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (CPEDV) is hosting its annual Heart To Heart Legislative Advocacy Day on February 12th. The all-day event will bring over 100 domestic violence survivors and their advocates to the State Capitol so they can tell their stories, face-to-face, to California lawmakers.

Participants at this event will include Tracie Stafford, a domestic violence survivor and the reigning Mrs. California. Stafford said she decided to attend because her first experience offering testimony to legislators,

during last year's Domestic Violence Awareness Month, was a turning point in her life.

"It was very emotional for me," she said. "It allowed me to assert power over a situation where I had been powerless. Legislators need to hear from survivors directly, to put a face to this problem. We have to build a bridge between the people who make the policy and the people who live the experience of domestic violence. No one can build that bridge better than survivors."

Stafford will join the other survivors and advocates at the Capitol for a day of legislative advocacy and policy briefings. Many prominent Senators and Assembly members are scheduled to attend, including Assemblymember and Majority Whip Fiona Ma, Assemblymember Todd Spitzer, Assemblymember Alberto Torrico, Senator Sheila Kuehl and Senator Gloria Romero. Senator Romero, the highest-ranking woman in the California Legislature, will deliver the luncheon keynote address. (Please see attached schedule for details.)

Marivic Mabanag, CPEDV Executive Director, said that this type of direct advocacy is especially important now, when all state-funded domestic violence programs are facing 10% funding cuts in the Governor's budget proposal, and victim services are in jeopardy.

"Let me be clear: California's domestic violence programs cannot sustain a 10% cut," Mabanag said. "Advocates and survivors are coming to Sacramento to deliver the message to legislators that domestic violence agencies provide life-saving services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to women and children escaping abuse. These programs protect victims and ensure public safety; our state cannot do without them."

In addition to a legislative briefing in the morning, the Heart to Heart event will include a luncheon awards ceremony in which CPEDV honors its strongest allies in the Senate and Assembly, and afternoon visits when advocates and survivors deliver Valentines and have "heart to heart" talks with their State representatives. Heart to Heart is a unique event bringing together California's

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domestic violence community with the legislators who craft the policy that impacts their lives.

What: Heart to Heart Domestic Violence Legislative Advocacy Day
Where: State Capitol Building Basement, Eureka Room
When: Tuesday February 12th, 2008 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

About the CPEDV

The California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (CPEDV) is California's statewide domestic violence coalition, with 200 member organizations and individuals. Working at the local, state and national levels for more than 25 years, the California Partnership has a long track record of successfully passing over 100 pieces of legislation on behalf of battered women and their children. As the unified voice for California's domestic violence agencies, CPEDV provides statewide leadership on public policy issues, offers training and technical assistance to domestic violence service providers and promotes public awareness through community outreach efforts. With offices in Sacramento, CPEDV's member programs span the entire state.



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