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Celebrating 29 Years of Empowering Women

April 7, 2017

Honorable Hannah-Beth Jackson
State Capitol, Room 2032
Sacramento, CA 95814
ATTN: Nora Lynn, nora.lynn@sen.ca.gov

RE: SB-331 Evidentiary privileges: domestic violence counselor-victim privilege – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Jackson,

On Behalf of the Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee (SBWPC), I am writing to express support for SB 331, addressing the expansion of domestic violence counselor-victim privilege to institutions of higher education. SBWPC's mission is dedicated to furthering gender equality and other feminist values through political and social action and educational activities. Our organization is one of the largest women's political committees in Santa Barbara County. We advocate for a diverse set of positions which include our commitment to ending crimes against women and protecting the victims of these crimes (<http://sbwpc.org/positions-new>).

The SBWPC position paper on Crimes Against Women states that we support legislation which "positively impacts survivor rights" and "assists in creating a more sensitive and survivor responsive criminal justice system." Existing law provides domestic violence victims "a privilege to refuse to disclose, and to prevent another from disclosing, a confidential communication between the victim and a domestic violence counselor" for counselors who are employed at a "nongovernmental organization or entity that provides shelter, programs, or services to victims of domestic violence." By extending this definition of eligible domestic violence victim service organizations to include public or private institutions of higher education, SB 331 expands the counselor-victim privilege for college students. Therefore, the SBWPC supports SB 331 as an opportunity to increase survivor rights and provide more sensitivity for domestic violence victims at our colleges and universities.

The Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee believes that SB 331 is a crucial step in protecting the rights and privacy of domestic violence victims at institutions of higher education. Therefore, SBWPC wishes to sign on as a supporter of the bill.

Thank you for reviewing our organization's position on this issue. Should you wish to communicate further with us, please email us at info@sbwpc.org or visit our website: www.sbwpc.org

Sincerely,

Catherine Swysen
President SBWPC

CC: Assemblymember Monique Limón, Fax: (805) 564-1651