

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **The New York City Anti-Violence Project Applauds the NYS Senate Passage of the "Access to Family Court" Bill**

#### **For Immediate Release**

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New York-In a unanimous 61-0 show of support, the New York State Senate passed the "Access to Family Court" bill introduced by Senator George H. Winner (R). The bill expands access to orders of protection to include LGBTQ, teen, and other survivors living with or dating abusive partners.

"This historic act of the NYS Legislature is another step in protecting the civil rights of all survivors, including those in the LGBTQ communities," said Sharon Stapel, Executive Director of the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP). "Having access to Family Court is a vital form of protection for victims who do not want to have their partners arrested and put through the criminal justice system. For many of AVP's clients the fear of being outed or mistreated by the police may prevent them from calling 911 when they are victimized. This law will allow them to seek safety and protection in the Family Court."

The bill, waiting to be signed into law, represents an important change from the current law, which only allows people related by blood, marriage or a child in common to obtain civil orders of protection. The new law will also bring New York in line with every other state in the U.S. that already protects victims who live with their abusive partners. "AVP has been involved in fighting for this law for a decade," said Jeannette Kossuth, AVP's Director of Client Services. "It will be instrumental in helping us to advocate for those who live with the risk of help coming too late."

"We congratulate the New York State Fair Access to Family Court Coalition, which led a state-wide campaign of organizations, including AVP, the Empire State Pride Agenda, the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Day One, to get this bill passed, and thank Senator Winner for his leadership and Senate Majority Leader Bruno and the rest of the Senate for their commitment to protect all victims of domestic violence in New York State," said Stapel, "and we also thank Assemblymember Helene Weinstein for her determined support of this bill over the last 20 years and to the entire New York State Assembly for its passage of the bill."

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In 2007, the Anti-Violence Project served over 2,000 victims of violence. The Anti-Violence Project's Safe Dating and Internet Safe Dating Tips, as well as annual reports on hate violence and domestic violence can be accessed online at [www.avp.org](http://www.avp.org) or by calling 212-714-1184.

The New York City Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project is the nation's largest service agency for victims of bias crimes against the lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and HIV-affected communities. Since 1980, the Anti-Violence Project has provided counseling and advocacy for tens of thousands of survivors of bias-motivated and domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, HIV-related violence, and police misconduct. The Anti-Violence Project documents incidents of violence against and within LGTB communities, educates the public about the effects of violence, against or within our communities, and works to reform public policies impacting all lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and HIV-affected people.

**The Anti-Violence Project provides free and confidential assistance to crime victims through its 24-hour bilingual hotline (212-714-1141).**