

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR KARA HAHN



FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

**PRESS RELEASE**

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For Immediate Release

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**Bellone signs Legislator Hahn's Domestic Violence  
Victim Risk Assessment Policy into Law**

*New initiative will protect victims of domestic abuse from repeat violence and risk of death*



**Photo:** Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone recognizes Legislator Kara Hahn for her work to implement a new policy that is expected to protect victims of domestic abuse from repeat violence and risk of death.

HAUPPAUGE, NY – Siting before lawmakers and advocates against domestic violence, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, today signed a bill that is intended to protect victims from repeated incidents. Under a new, multi-dimensional approach, the policy

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sponsored by Legislator Kara Hahn (D-Setauket) calls on County police to implement a highly regarded risk assessment model to objectively evaluate continued risk to victims from their abusers. At the same time, police will provide victims with a second danger assessment tool designed to raise their awareness of their risk of being abused again at the hands of an individual who may have already abused them at least once. Advocates will play a key role in this multi-dimensional approach.

In its previous, limited use by the Suffolk County Police Department, the *Portland Police Bureau's Risk Assessment for Intimate Partner Violence* proved to be highly accurate in identifying offenders who are likely to recommit acts of domestic violence against their partners. Police will also be charged with providing each victim of domestic violence with a separate self-administered Danger Assessment. Victims will be encouraged to use the 20 question test to determine the level of danger to them of being killed by an intimate partner. Additionally, the assessment will include referrals to domestic violence victim services and agencies that can provide guidance, counseling on partner abuse and resources, such as referral to domestic violence shelters.

“Unfortunately, there is an inclination for victims of domestic violence to trust that the abuses they suffer are isolated occurrences that will either never happen again or end as circumstances change. However, for far too many victims, the realization that it wasn’t a one-time occurrence is made only after another incident,” said Legislator Hahn. “Numbers don’t lie, people do and with these new tools serving as a guide, victims will be better able to understand their risk of repeated violence or death at the hands of an intimate partner.”

To create continuity between the police and domestic violence service organizations on this policy, the policy also requires agencies that receive County funding to become certified in the use of the Danger Assessment instrument. This tool was developed by noted domestic abuse educator and researcher Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell, who for more than 25 years has worked closely with law enforcement agencies, healthcare professionals, and domestic violence advocates to identify victims with the highest level

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of danger of being re-abused or killed.

“Today, I have the opportunity to sign legislation that will assist and help victims of domestic violence,” said County Executive Steve Bellone. “I applaud Legislator Hahn for introducing and supporting this legislation and thank the advocates who are standing with us today. Together we can make a difference in protecting the victims of domestic violence.”

Laura Ahearn, Executive Director of the Crime Victim Center at PFML said that "Emerging evidence demonstrates that domestic violence homicide is predictable and preventable, and this legislation is a comprehensive step forward to provide victims of domestic violence vital information that will help them accurately perceive the grave risk they may be facing in their current circumstances. I applaud Legislator Hahn for her leadership in spearheading this important legislation and for her successful collaboration with the County Executive, the Suffolk Police Department and Crime Victim Services agencies."

“Information is power,” stated Majority Leader and bill co-sponsor Legislator Rob Calarco. “These assessments provide information to both the police and the victim that can help prevent domestic violence homicide. I commend Legislator Hahn for her leadership on this very important issue.”

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