

Public Policy Meme
Summer Anderson
Winter 2024

To: Evergreen College Admissions Department
From: Summer Anderson
Date: January 30 2024
Subject: Domestic Violence Laws in Washington State

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the current domestic violence laws within the state of Washington. I believe them to be well intentioned but flawed in that they lead to alienation or termination of family units rather than rehabilitation and reconciliation. My concern is this is causing higher rates of incarceration and generational trauma, both of which negatively impact our communities.

As the law currently works, individuals that are arrested or charged with domestic violence are immediately issued a no contact order with the other party and are forced to get a Domestic Violence Perpetrator Assessment and comply with all recommendations. Well intentioned in theory but not in practice. I have found that there are very few places offering this type of assessment (if any) and at a high cost to the perpetrator. Waiting time even for initial assessment can be several months and then can take up to an additional year of classes to complete the recommendations.

During this time the breakdown of the family unit begins to take place, people are no longer able to cohabitate and are forced to pay the expense of two households, live in shelters, stay with friends or family or even live in a vehicle. It has been my experience that this is only reasonable for a short period of time and often families attempt to circumvent this by re-uniting unlawfully. For people that are forced to choose this option it often ends with a violation of the original court order and long stints of incarceration ranging from several months to several years.

I think to remedy this we need to consider looking to the state to cover the cost of required evaluations and treatment classes much like we do for drug and alcohol rehabilitation. This stream of funding would allow our communities to better put these services into practice and shorten the amount of time individuals and families are waiting in limbo.

Domestic Violence is a serious issue and can have lasting impact on families. My hope is that we can move away from the punitive sources of punishment such as the high cost of classes and incarceration and move towards funding more treatment options and support for the families.

Thank You

