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**The City of New York  
Community Board 8 Manhattan  
Women & Families Committee Meeting  
June 15, 2021, at 6:30 pm on Zoom**

*Please note: The resolutions contained in the committee minutes are recommendations submitted by the committee chair to the Community Board. At the monthly full board meeting, the resolutions are discussed and voted upon by all members of Community Board 8 Manhattan.*

**MINUTES:**

**Resolution for approval:**

**Item 1 - Crime of Coercive Control Act Support**

**CB8 Members in attendance:** Vanessa Aronson, Elizabeth Ashby, Gayle Baron, Lori Bores, Taina Borrero, Alida Camp, Saundra Coleman, Rebecca Dangoor, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Rami Sigal, Russell Squire.

**Domestic Violence on the Rise during the Pandemic.**

Forms of domestic violence surged, city, state and globally, during the pandemic as factors such as unemployment and lockdowns kept people at home and socially isolated.

These were among the messages conveyed by speakers at the June 15 W&F Committee meeting. Presenters included Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright, Rachel Teicher, director of Intimate Partner Violence Intervention at the National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Manhattan Assistant District Attorney Pamela Blandino, Karen Benjamin-Hamlet, who supervises the Victim Assistant Center in the Manhattan DA's office, and Sgt. Sumay Lee of the 19<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct.

Data show that severe physical domestic violence affects about one in three women and about one in four men during their lifetime. And the pandemic has clearly had an impact: According to Assembly Member Seawright, the New York State Sexual Violence hotline recorded a 33% jump between April 2020 and April 2019 in the number of calls to the hotline.

Although physical harm, including strangulation, is the most familiar form of domestic violence, speakers discussed emotional methods of domestic abuse. They also cited the growing use, especially during the pandemic, of newer electronic tools--such as texts, emails and social media postings--to inflict abuse on partners.

In New York City, a wide variety of resources exist for victims, including such programs as the Abusive Partner Intervention Program. Sgt. Lee, of the 19<sup>th</sup> Precinct, cited her domestic violence unit's work with the NYC Crime Violence Assistance Program. She also noted that Upper East Side victims of domestic violence can call her unit at 212-452-0663.

Beyond physical violence, a form of domestic partner abuse, called coercive control, has been gaining attention, nationally, as well as in the New York State Legislature.

Essentially, coercive control involves on-going efforts to control an intimate partner--usually a woman--either by preventing her from engaging in activities or having access to finances or by forcing her into unwanted behaviors through humiliation, intimidation, or other means.

The New York State Legislature, which will reconvene in January, has been considering bills to make coercive control a crime in New York State.

CB8 members at the W& F Committee meeting voted unanimously to urge the state's legislature to pass the proposed Crime of Coercive Control Act, (or the New York State Phoenix Act, which includes provisions making coercive control a felony) in the next 2022 legislative session.

## **RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, statistics show that nationally, one in three women and one in four men have experienced some form of physical domestic violence; and,

**WHEREAS**, domestic violence also involves coercive control, which is oppressive behavior aimed at stifling a person's freedoms and/or forcing them to engage in unwanted actions through a process of on-going intimidation, humiliation, isolation, and other means; and,

**WHEREAS**, coercive control is a more pervasive problem than even physical domestic violence but has no legal status in most U.S. jurisdictions; and,

**WHEREAS**, coercive control affects women much more so than men due to lingering perceptions by some men that they should wield the power in a household; and,

**WHEREAS**, bills in the New York State legislature—including as part of the proposed New York State Phoenix Act—would make coercive control a crime in New York State; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Phoenix Act passed in the state's Senate during the 2021 legislative session but failed to pass in the state's Assembly; therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that Community Board 8 Manhattan strongly urges the New York State Senate and Assembly in its next 2022 session to pass legislation that would make coercive control a felony in New York State, which would help protect women from this pernicious form of domestic abuse.

## **VOTE: 10-0-0**

**In favor:** Vanessa Aronson, Gayle Baron, Lori Bores, Alida Camp, Saundrea Coleman, Rebecca Dangoor, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Rami Sigal, Russell Squire.

**P. Gayle Baron and Margaret Price, Co-Chairs**