

Dear Governor Haley,

I write this in hope that my voice and the voices of many women and children across our state will be heard and heartfelt. I would like to start by introducing myself. I am a 42 year old mother of three that is disabled with Multiple Sclerosis. I am also married to a veteran diagnosed with PTSD, personality disorder, and eventually an addiction to crack cocaine.

In July of 2015, after suffering through weeks of extreme heat in our home and my husband's unwillingness to provide more air conditioners, I was forced to go to a friend's air conditioned home to cool off. Many people with MS find that heat can cause their symptoms to worsen. This might involve a build up of fatigue, blurred vision, loss of balance or a worsening of cognitive symptoms such as concentration or memory. The symptoms are generally quickly reversed when body temperature returns to normal. My leaving angered my husband so much that he chased my friend's car, with me in it, with an axe. As we drove off I watched him turn his anger on my van, our only vehicle, smashing all of the windows out and hacking the body with the axe. Of course I was too afraid to go back home and my children were away visiting family so I stayed the night with my friends that were kind enough to let me stay. I needed medications and therefore required a police escort to retrieve my medications the next day. The only items I was allowed to take were my medications and the safe I now kept them in. That didn't matter because my husband had hacked up most of my valuable items and artwork with the axe already and pawned my sons' valuables to buy crack. On the next day I got a visit from a police officer to notify me that my husband had blown up my van and set my house on fire with him in it. My husband was arrested for arson.

My husband used withholding basic medical necessities and its effects on my physical abilities as a way to control me and seclude me from friends and family. The effects of heat on my vision make it unsafe or impossible for me to drive or leave my home. I was, in essence, trapped in my home with an angry drug addict craving his next fix. There were times that when he could no longer afford the drugs he would take to stealing any medication with the potential to alter his mind from my children and me. I'm sure you can understand the suffering I endured by being forced to tolerate high temperatures that creates a need for medications to combat symptoms only to find your medication bottle empty and a month to go for a refill.

After reporting my medications stolen to the police, I was shocked to find out when the police arrived that this was indeed, not illegal in South Carolina. The police officer that came out let my husband know that our medications was his marital property and he could help himself to all and any of our medications he desired and he could get away with it. During one altercation that incurred in front of my mother and mother in law, where my husband was physically pushing me and trying to bite me, my mother was forced to call 911. When officers arrived, after they questioned me about my husband's complaints of me withholding his money, because my husband's money is obviously not considered marital property even if it is deposited into my personal bank account, these officers couldn't determine who the aggressor in the incident was.

Even with my mother and his mother as witnesses they could not determine who amongst the four of us was telling the truth about who the aggressor was. Of course three women versus one man and the women are to be unbelievers. The officers left us to deal with an even angrier man who was just informed of his privilege by law enforcement. Although it is illegal for a person to withhold medications or basic necessities from children or the elderly, it's obviously not illegal for a husband to force his wife to live in life threatening conditions in SC.

Previous attempts to leave my husband and take temporary shelter only ended in being kicked out for calling the police on other women in the shelter for threatening to kill "people" while the staff did nothing. I should have learned my lesson then and never called the police again. During one stay at a shelter there was maintenance needed for the upstairs air conditioning causing it to not work. The thermostat outside my upstairs room read 94 degrees. Although I tried to explain to the staff why my medical condition required access to cooling I was forced to sleep in the dangerously high temperatures with my children while other women and their children were allowed to sleep on couches downstairs where the air conditioning worked. Luckily for me I did not lose the ability to walk during this situation. The rules of this particular shelter required an ambulance to take you to the hospital to stay if you were too sick to get out of bed, as anyone with Multiple Sclerosis often is. No childcare was provided during your hospital stay. In an attempt to get temporary shelter at one shelter I was informed that I was a liability due to having MS and they could not accept me.

After requesting an emergency hearing for an order of protection before my husband was released from jail, I was rewarded child support and no financial assistance from my husband who draws \$3000.00 a month in disability through the VA. Now my husband is out on bond, living off of \$3000.00 a month to spend on crack while awaiting trial for two counts of second degree arson that forced me and my children to be homeless and without transportation. I have no income while awaiting my appeal for disability due to Multiple Sclerosis other than the child support I was awarded and my husband refuses to pay. No victims advocate assisted me in finding housing or transportation. I was completely on my own with my two children

Approximately a month before this incident occurred I managed to get my husband involuntary committed to the VA hospital in Columbia only to have him come home in less than a week because he was found to be no threat to himself or others.

I'm sure you are aware that SC ranks first among states for women murdered by men, South Carolina had a rate of 2.32 women killed per 100,000 people in 2013, the latest year for which statistics are available. I appreciate the work you do by trying to control access to guns and wish you the best in accomplishing your goals. I also thank you for taking down that stinking flag that littered our Statehouse lawn. But I'm begging you to take a look at all the conditions that contribute to the high rates of domestic violence in SC and the nation as a whole. I would also like to ask you to read the book "Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men" by Lundy Bancroft. This book was given to me at an emergency shelter for

women and victims of domestic violence. This book was imperative at convincing family to help me stay away from my husband.

It may seem like a great day in SC looking out of your window, but from where I'm sitting I see that our system is set to up to protect and provide for criminals and the victims are forgotten. Those victims include innocent children and even the taxpayers of South Carolina and the United States. Is this going to be your legacy Governor Haley? Is the first female Governor of South Carolina going to fail the women of our state or is she going to be as bold as she was when taking down the flag? You must not ignore the police corruption, lack of training, and basic morals. What happened to those Christian family values I hear so much about? Either you don't know or you don't care. My children and I need more than gun control. We need swift and deliberate action and we need funding for assistance to victims of domestic violence. We are taxpayers and we deserve to be represented and served by our public servants like anybody else. We need to knock down the speed bumps in the road facing victims of domestic violence.

I thank you for your time and wish you the best of success with combatting domestic violence. I invite you to talk to the women that are unrepresented in our state. I invite you to look into our children's eyes and tell them that SC cares and will make changes to protect us all and not only the criminals. Most of all I want to believe that this letter will not fall on deaf ears.

Sincerely,

Amanda Hardwick

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