

Jon Wainwright: Welcome to another edition of Policy Change in Practice. We are here today with Beth Hassett, who is the CEO and Executive Director of WEAVE - Women Escaping A Violent Environment. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Beth Hassett: Thank you for having me.

JW: So, kind of the basic idea of these podcasts is we talk to people who are engaged in changing policies at various level of government - local, state - and I know that you do such great work in the community here, so we're really excited to have you in to talk about the work you do. So, to get started, how did WEAVE start, and what does your organization do?

BH: We started 39 years ago...

JW: Wow.

BH: ... as a domestic violence agency and took over the rape crisis work of the County in the 80's and have since added anti-sex trafficking works that we do as well. So, we're involved in all sorts of victimization of women, children, and men, and serve the general area around Sacramento, but Sacramento County in particular.

JW: And then, as an organization, how are you guys set up? Because I know that's very critical to how you're able to engage in policy issues.

BH: We're a 501 (c) (3), so we're precluded from doing lobbying work. We do a lot of education and a lot of advocacy for the clients we serve and the people who might be affected by the laws that are being made at the Capitol.

JW: And I know we've touched on it a little bit here, we talked about how you work on victimization issues - you took over the rape crisis work for the County, domestic violence - it sounds like a quite a few policies that kind of fall under the umbrella of what WEAVE works on.

BH: We do a couple of things. We focus a lot on shoring up laws and loopholes and things that were the unintended consequences of laws from the past. So we're looking at how can we make sure we're holding perpetrators accountable appropriately and how can we make sure that victims are protected?

But then we also look at new opportunities to come up with new laws and as technology has changed, a lot of opportunities have come up around: whoever thought that a phone would be used in the way that it is to further victimize someone, or who knew Facebook was ever going to happen?

And we also participate in, and join in on, things that affect just the general non-profit community - things around disclosures and what we have to do around donors and that

sort of thing; as well as things that affect people who are marginalized, or low income, or underserved.

JW: Great. So how does WEAVE go about working on these policies? Obviously, education is a huge part of it. What other tools do you have in your toolbox for working on these things?

BH: We have a firm that actually does pro bono lobbying for us. We meet with them and talk with them about what bills there are and they track them for us, and really give us some guidance on when we should weigh in and when we should just back off. Because we get a lot of calls from the media, calls from different offices asking us to support or participate in some of their legislation. And we're very cautious about using our name and any of the good will we have out there. So we're pretty careful about that.

We also belong to a couple of coalitions that do a lot of policy work. So we participate as is appropriate with them.

JW: Okay. And what are some of the - what's one of the main coalitions you work with where you find yourself engaging on policy issues?

BH: CalCASA is the sexual assault coalition, and then we work very closely with CPEDV, which is the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence.

JW: What is WEAVE's role, within that coalition? How does that function?

BH: All of the WEAVEs throughout the state, we have a lot of sister organizations that have other names than WEAVE, are all members of that coalition and those of us who are interested in it participate in their policy work by - as a group, a collective number of us - we decide, you know, what are our initiatives and what are our priorities for the year? What really matters to our region, we're the North Region. We're looking at everybody - people who are urban, suburban, also the rural agencies that have completely different issues that affect their clients. So, we're looking at what's rising up to the top statewide that we all feel like we all can hang our hats on and lend our voices to?

JW: So what's the process like when you're with all these different groups, and obviously, you're balancing very different priorities? How does these different regions, and CPEDV as a whole, figure out what their priorities are going to be for an upcoming legislative year?

BH: We come together in the early Fall and just brainstorm ideas: Is it time to increase the marriage license fee? Because we all get some of the funds from that. Is there something really out there that we want to go after? And we just do a big brainstorm session and then we take it back to our regions and we pick what our top issues are for our particular regions. The North, other than Sacramento, tends to be pretty rural, so, our issues are very different than Los Angeles or the Bay Area for instance. Then we

come back together and really vet it and pick our two or three top priorities. And it all culminates in a big legislative action day in the Spring where we go and meet with legislators and have our talking points and it's a very structured process that all of us participate in.

JW: Great. I think that's really all we have. If people want to learn more about the work that WEAVE does, or the work that CPEDV does, where can they find that information?

BH: On our websites, weaveinc.org. And then CPEDV also has their website and there are sections on policy on their website which would give you a big picture on what's going on in the state on domestic violence issues.

JW: Fantastic, well thank you so much for taking the time to come and chat with us today.

BH: Thank you for having me.