



Women's Center of
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March 23, 2006

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Women's Center of Greater Danbury

*HB 5819: An Act Concerning Harassment of Crime Victims, Compensation of
Crime Victims, and Waiver of Court Fees for Indigent Inmates*

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary
Committee:

As the CONNSACS member agency providing support to victims of sexual assault in the Greater Danbury area, we respectfully request that language be added to sec. 54-211 of this current law to allow victim compensation application eligibility for sexual assault victims who have not reported the crime to the police, but have undergone a sexual assault exam and forensic evidence collection within 72 hours of the assault. Since the federal Victim of Crime Act allows states to use the forensic evidence exam in lieu of a police report to prove eligibility for victim compensation, altering the language of this statute will not jeopardize state VOCA funding and will be a significant statement of support of rape victims currently being excluded from eligibility.

While reporting an assault to the police and pursuing the criminal justice option are choices that can help both in a victim's recovery and in holding rapists accountable (thus hopefully ending sexual assault in our society), given our society's hostile, unsupportive environment towards rape victims, only the victim can decide if s/he is strong enough to pursue the criminal justice option and, indeed, if that option is what s/he needs to recover.

In fact, Bureau of Justice statistics indicate that only 26% of rape victims nationwide have reported to police in the past eight years. Last year, in Connecticut, nearly 1000 forensic evidence kits were completed but our OVS reports that the number of sexual assault victims receiving victim compensation has declined over the past two years from 52 to 36. A significant majority of rape victims are not applying for compensation, perhaps due in part to the police report requirement, and yet these victims still have the financial needs necessitated by being a crime victim, including the costs of medical treatment, counseling and lost wages.

Given the weight of these arguments, the Women's Center of Greater Danbury urges you to support changes in the language of sec. 54-211 of the current law in order to expand the eligibility requirements for rape victims seeking compensation.

Respectfully submitted,

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