



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

96 Pitkin Street
East Hartford, CT 06108
Phone/TTY: 860-282-9881
Fax: 860-291-9335
www.connsacs.org

Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

Nancy Kushins, Executive Director

*In support of HB 5651: An Act Adopting the Recommendations of the Report of the
Commission on Prison and Jail Overcrowding*

In support of SB 439: An Act Concerning Sexual Assault

Submitted to the Judiciary Committee Public Hearing, March 13, 2006

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Nancy Kushins and I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is the statewide association of nine community-based rape crisis centers in Connecticut. Our mission is to end sexual violence and ensure high quality, comprehensive and culturally competent sexual assault victim services.

During fiscal year 2004-2005 CONNSACS' community-based program staff and volunteers provided services to 4,742 sexual assault victims and their families. Our member centers also provided risk reduction and prevention education to more than 41,279 children and youth and to nearly 9,000 members of the general public and training for over 3,020 professionals, including law enforcement personnel.

The effective supervision of sex offenders in the community continues to be a topic of concern and discussion across the country and here in Connecticut. Most offenders who are convicted of one or more sex crimes will be supervised in the community at some point – either immediately following sentencing or after a period of incarceration in jail or prison. These offenders present unique challenges to probation and parole departments that are primarily responsible for supervising them. Because of the potentially volatile community responses to sex offenders and the irrefutable harm that re-offenses would cause potential victims, the community supervision of sex offenders is of critical importance to criminal justice agencies and the public.

According to the Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM), a project of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, "a primary goal of supervision is the protection of victims and the prevention of future victims". CSOM recommends that supervision agencies should work closely with victim advocacy organizations to ensure that their policies do not re-traumatize victims of sexual assault or inadvertently jeopardize the safety of others.

Based on the groundbreaking work that has been done through collaboration with Court Support Services Division (CSSD), the Center for the Treatment of Problem Sexual Behavior (CTPSB) and Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS), this program has been designated by CSOM as a National Resource Site. Since 1995, these three entities

have worked together in the Intensive Sex Offender Probation Units located in New Haven, New London and Hartford to supervise and provide treatment for sex offenders, utilizing the nationally recognized containment model. Containment is an overall shared philosophy that targets community and victim safety whereby multiple stakeholders with similar goals, but different roles, help the adult offender with problem sexual behavior by setting healthy limits on the adult's behavior in the community. The containment model is well accepted and used in most states. Connecticut was the first state to incorporate the Victim Advocate as an active player in the containment model, and the CSSD, CTPSB and CONNSACS team have been asked over the years to consult with other states that have chosen to replicate this model. All three organizations have been nationally recognized for their work in this arena.

An essential component of sex offender treatment is holding the sex offender accountable for his/her behavior. Those who oppose this model may assert that a victim centered and community safety approach detracts from the sex offender as the client. In fact, it is in the best interest of the sex offender, as a client of treatment and supervision, to be held accountable and to assist him/her to not re-offend.

HB 5651 proposes expanding the successful work of the existing sex offender supervision/treatment/victim advocate teams to all probation units throughout the state (in addition to those in Hartford, New London and New Haven), as well as implementing the victim advocacy component of sex offender supervision and treatment in parole units. This includes ensuring a manageable caseload of 25 offenders with problem sexual behavior for each probation/parole officer, as recommended by the Issues Committee of the American Probation and Parole Association.

Given the high level of public interest in the issue of sex offenders in the community, education is of critical importance. HB 5651 includes a recommendation that community education forums be presented by a collaborative team that would include representatives from law enforcement, probation, parole, the Sex Offender Registry Unit of the Department of Public Safety, Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services and the Center for the Treatment of Problem Sexual Behavior. The intent of the curriculum would be to empower citizens by providing accurate and pertinent information about offenders with problem sexual behavior, including the explanation of registration and monitoring, as well as providing strategies for keeping individuals and families safe.

CONNSACS strongly supports HB 5651 in the interest of sexual assault victims, community safety and the success of offenders with problem sexual behavior, by providing them with tools and resources to assist in preventing re-offenses.

In addition, CONNSACS strongly supports SB 439, a bill that expands the definition of a sex offense to include substances emitted from intimate parts. This change in statute will allow for those offenders who use substances from body parts to assault other persons to be appropriately charged, and reassures victims and citizens that the state appropriately acknowledges the assault as a sex offense.

Thank you for your consideration.