

**Date:** March 23, 2006

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

**From:** Robyn-Jay Bage, Chief Executive Officer, Women and Families Center

**Re:** *H. B. 5819 AN ACT CONCERNING HARASSMENT OF CRIME VICTIMS,  
COMPENSATION OF CRIME VICTIMS AND WAIVER OF COURT FEES FOR  
INDIGENT INMATES*

**Position:** Support

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Women and Families Center has been providing services to child and adult survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones in Meriden, Cheshire, Wallingford, and Middlesex County for over 20 years through our Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) program. In July 2003, WFC SACS extended its service area to provide sexual assault crisis services to the greater New Haven area. The free and confidential services our staff and volunteers provide include: crisis intervention through our 24 hour hotline, individual and group support services, advocacy, and accompaniment during medical and legal procedures. We also offer training for professionals and prevention education for the larger community.

We support *H. B. 5819 AN ACT CONCERNING HARASSMENT OF CRIME VICTIMS, COMPENSATION OF CRIME VICTIMS AND WAIVER OF COURT FEES FOR INDIGENT INMATES*, and urge the committee to amend the bill to **expand Victim Compensation eligibility** to sexual assault victims who have undergone a sexual assault exam and evidence collection but have not reported the crime to the police. We ask you to include in the eligibility criteria victims who have received medical attention within 72 hours of their experience of sexual violence, and underwent the evidence collection process.

The physical, emotional or psychological injuries suffered as a result of Sexual Assault may take a lifetime to heal. As an agency that supports survivors of Sexual Assault, we encourage clients to go forward with the evidence collection, but understand that filing a police report may be difficult for some survivors. However, these survivors should not have to incur the financial impact of medical bills, including prescriptions, lost time from employment, lost or damaged property, mental health treatment and so many other factors merely because they found themselves unable to pursue police action.

According to the Bureau of Justice statistics, only 26% of sexual assaults were reported to police during the period of 1992-2000. According to statistics from the Connecticut Office of Victim Services, the number of sexual assault victims receiving victim compensation has declined over the past two years from 52 to 36.

Expanding the eligibility to these crime victims will provide sexual assault victims with the necessary resources for their physical and emotional wellbeing. This change would not adversely affect state compliance with federal Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) funding guidelines which allow for states to use forensic exams in lieu of police reports for eligibility for victim compensation programs.