



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

Nancy Kushins, Executive Director
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing, March 10, 2008

SUPPORT: SB 642 AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF VICTIM ADVOCATES IN COURTHOUSES.

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the Judiciary Committee, on behalf of CONNSACS and our nine member programs I want to submit testimony in favor of SB 642. 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 2006-2007 CONNSACS' community-based program staff and volunteers provided services to 4,326 sexual assault victims and their families. Our member centers also provided risk reduction and prevention education to nearly 34,000 children and youth and to over 5,000 members of the general public and training for close to 2,500 professionals, including law enforcement personnel.

CONNSACS is in full support of SB 642 which addresses a gap in access to court based victim advocates in Connecticut.

Crime victims who have the courage to come forward and participate in the criminal justice system deserve to have access to a victim advocate in the court in which their case is being heard.

Victim advocates help to ensure that victims understand their rights and have a voice in the process. They provide support, timely information and access to a system that can be frustrating. Without support, many victims will not stay involved in the process.

Court based victim advocates also serve as a vital link to community based counseling and advocacy services. Many victims that are served by sexual assault crisis counselors were originally referred by a court based victim advocate.

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We urge you to support SB 642.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you would like additional information about our position or services.

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