



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

**SB 899 An Act Implementing The Guarantee Of Equal Protection Under The Constitution Of
The State For Same Sex Couples**

Elizabeth Cafarella, Director of Public Policy and Communication

Submitted to the Judiciary Committee

Public Hearing, March 6, 2009

Good morning Senator MacDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the Committee, my name is Elizabeth Cafarella, and I am the Director of Public Policy and Communication at Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. (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.

CONNSACS submits this testimony in support of SB 899 An Act Implementing the Guarantee of Equal Protection Under the Constitution of the State for Same Sex Couples. CONNSACS has a long history of anti-oppression work. We feel strongly that discrimination in any form is unacceptable. We serve victims of sexual assault from all segments of the population—all ages, demographics, and orientations.

Victims of sexual assault who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered may have particular fears and concerns specifically related to their sexual orientation. These concerns may be not only about the assault, but about how they will be treated by health professionals, law enforcement, the legal system, their friends and family and/or their partner. Violence against gays and lesbians occurs everywhere: in schools, the workplace, public places and in the home. In many cases when lesbians are assaulted, it happens simply because they are female.

When sexual assaults are perpetrated against people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered as a way of “punishing” them because of their sexual orientation, these assaults tend to be more violent and often cause more injuries than other sexual assaults. These acts are hate crimes.

Just as everyone has the right to nonjudgmental services, everyone should have the right to marry the person of their choosing. Aligning our state statutes with the *Kerrigan* ruling will go a long way toward enshrining in law the full citizenship that same-sex couples deserve.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding our position or services. Please feel free to contact me by email (ecafarella@connacs.org) or by phone (860.282.9881).

Thank you for your consideration.