

Testimony of Kathleen Parker, UCONN School of Social Work
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Good morning Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, honorable Senators and Representatives. My name is Kate Parker, I am currently a student at the UCONN School of Social Work and am a former sexual assault counselor advocate for the YWCA New Britain Sexual Assault Crisis Program.

I am here to testify on HB 6361 An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners Program. I am seeking your support for this legislation knowing the state continually strides to support survivors of sexual violence.

I'd like to talk briefly about a positive experience I had when I was accompanying a survivor to the hospital with a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). Because of the SANE's skill and experience the forensic exam took only two hours. Putting this into perspective the wait time and exam can some time take up to eight hours. All procedures of the forensic exam were compassionately explained by the SANE to the survivor prior to the procedure taking place. The SANE provided the survivor with the time and space to be informed of all aspects of the exam, to be part of the process, and to respect survivor when at one point she needed to stop to collect her energy and will to move forward. The exam itself was done with the confidence and expertise to minimize the survivor's pain, particularly during the invasive portions of the evidence collection. I believe this was due to the SANE's training and on-going experience working with survivors and collecting evidence.

I also believe because of our mutual understanding of our roles the survivor's medical and physical needs were attended to by the SANE while I attended to the survivor's psychosocial needs. This understanding and partnership between the SANE and me allowed us to focus on our equally important tasks and work to ensure that the survivor's requests, questions, and needs were answered helping the survivor make informed choices about her next steps. This included the SANE answering questions about follow up medications and testing and the survivor and I discussing potential ways she could disclose her rape to family and friends.

As it currently stands it is essentially a role of the dice if a SANE will be there to provide this expert care that works to minimize any additional trauma a survivor might face when they enter the walls of the hospital. This game of chance has occurred for the more than 400 survivors who chose to seek medical intervention and have evidence collected in FY 2008. By enabling the passage of HB 6361 this will increase likelihood that all survivors will be met with the same expertise, experience, and standard of care the survivor received from the SANE, as I have described. From an advocate's perspective, establishing a SAFE/SANE program means the partnership between the medical and advocacy professions will continue to grow and be that much more strengthened by its shared goal of minimizing trauma, supporting survivors by providing current and accurate information, and practicing skilled care.

Thank you for the opportunity for allowing me to speak.