



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services
**In Support of SB 847, AN ACT CONCERNING THE ELIMINATION OF SEXUAL
VIOLENCE ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES**

Anna Doroghazi, Director of Public Policy and Communication
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement, February 10, 2011

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and honorable members of the Committee, my name is Anna Doroghazi, and I am the Director of Public Policy and Communication for Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is the statewide association of Connecticut's nine community-based rape crisis programs. During the last fiscal year, advocates throughout the state provided services to 5,190 victims of sexual violence and their loved ones. In addition to providing sexual assault crisis counseling and education, we work closely with colleges and universities to ensure that victims/survivors of sexual violence are treated with fairness and respect in the aftermath of an assault. Based on that work, we would like to offer our support for **SB 847, An Act Concerning the Elimination of Sexual Violence on College Campuses**.

Research has consistently shown that up to 25%¹ of women will be victims of sexual violence during their college careers. Although approximately 2/3 of these women reach out to friends or other supportive figures following an assault, very few reach out to a campus official, and only 5% report their victimization to police.² When asked why they did not report being raped, women cited a range of concerns including: not wanting other people to know (47%), fear of being treated with hostility by the police (25%), fear of reprisal (40%), not believing that the incident was serious enough to report (65%), and not knowing how to report (14%).³

SB 847 has the potential to address some of these concerns by requiring universities to share information about reporting, available resources, and options for safety planning after an assault. It would require institutions to disclose information about their disciplinary proceedings and ensure that those conducting the proceedings are trained in issues relating to sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Perhaps most importantly, it would require colleges and universities to provide primary prevention and awareness programming for all new students and employees.

¹ Hirsch, Kathleen. "Fraternities of Fear: Gang Rape, Male Bonding, and the Silencing of Women." Ms. Magazine, 2000: 1(2) 52-56.

² Fisher, B.S., F.T. Cullen, and M.G. Turner. "The Sexual Victimization of College Women." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics and National Institute of Justice, 2000, NCJ 182369.

³ *Ibid.*

Primary prevention programming aims to prevent sexual violence before it occurs. Rather than telling female students to stay inside at night and blow a whistle if they are attacked (which, sadly, was the full extent of the “prevention” education that I received at school), primary prevention programming encourages students to examine the social norms that support violence and asks them to take an active role in its prevention. It empowers all students to step in and hold their peers accountable for words and actions that lead to violence. Primary prevention education has the potential to change the culture of a campus and make it a safer place for learning, and any form of awareness programming sends a message to students and staff that the institution takes sexual assault seriously. If victims believe that their campus will respond to their victimization in a fair and sensitive manner, they are much more likely to reach out for assistance and take steps to hold their offender accountable before he or she can perpetrate other crimes.

Thank you for considering this important piece of legislation. We hope that you will join us in supporting SB 847.

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