

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

Bethany Hamilton, Prevention and Training Coordinator  
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement, February 10, 2011

Senator Bye, Representative Willis and honorable members of the Committee, my name is Bethany Hamilton and I am the Prevention and Training Coordinator for Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is the statewide coalition of community-based sexual assault crisis programs. I have worked with victims as a sexual assault crisis counselor and currently work with several of Connecticut's colleges and universities in my role at CONNSACS. I am writing to enthusiastically support SB 847: An Act Concerning the Elimination of Sexual Violence on College Campuses.

This impact of this important legislation is two-fold. SB 847 would simultaneously bolster existing sexual assault policies and services at Connecticut colleges and universities, while also providing support for much needed prevention and awareness programming. This legislation offers a vital and unique opportunity to assist victims of sexual violence *and* to prevent the perpetration of sexual violence through primary prevention education.

Universities strive to provide fair and equitable treatment to both the accused student and the complainant during sexual misconduct hearings; however, the unintended consequences of poor policies, lack of training specific to sexual violence, and a dearth of comprehensive support services often leave students doubly victimized following a sexual assault on campus. SB 847 would provide much needed guidance for universities to create comprehensive sexual assault policies, as well as to train their staff about the distinct and complex issues of sexual violence and intimate partner violence. The lack of policy and training specific to sexual violence hinders investigations, as well as compromises administrators' ability to provide appropriate support to the victims of sexual violence.

While numerous researchers have documented the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses, there is less research identifying the lasting effects that an assault has on the victim. Many victims choose to leave campus or drop out of school altogether following a sexual assault. The victims I have worked with who reported their assault to campus officials noted receiving little to no information about their rights, poor administrative follow through and notifications during the process, and insufficient support during, and especially after, the judicial process. Victims often felt that they had few options and were seemingly forced to choose between their emotional well-being and their college careers.

This legislation would greatly benefit students enrolled in a college or university in Connecticut, as well as all citizens of our state as we continue to work towards the elimination of sexual violence. I hope that you will join us in supporting SB 847.

Thank you.

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