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Testimony of the CT Chapter of the National Organization for Women (CT NOW) Before the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement February 10, 2011

In Support of SB 847, An Act Concerning the Elimination of Sexual Violence on College Campuses

The CT Chapter of the National Organization for Women (CT NOW) strongly supports SB 847, An Act Concerning the Elimination of Sexual Violence on College Campuses. This bill would update the federal sexual assault policy requirements set forth in the Jeanne Clery Act. Research indicates that many schools' compliance with federal law is inconsistent at best. This bill would ensure that students are provided with better policies around sexual violence and assist those who are victims of such violence.

On many college campuses, and in our society at large, there is a culture of silence around sexual violence. At least 1 in 4 college women will be the victim of a sexual assault during her college career, yet fewer than 5% will report the assault to Law Enforcement. This is likely because at least 80% of all sexual assaults are committed by an acquaintance of the victim. Many victims fear social isolation, reprisal, or that they won't be believed. Some students don't even know how to report their attack, should they feel brave enough to do so. There are also too few outlets for students to have conversations about sexual violence and how to prevent it. While many colleges and universities have "blue lights" on campus or offer self-defense classes for women, these measures do nothing to prevent an assault that happens in a victim's own dorm room, by someone she knows.

SB 847 would also require that colleges and universities do more to primary prevention education, which emphasizes the belief that all members of a community have a responsibility to stop sexual violence *before* it occurs. By encouraging everyone to actively prevent the problem of sexual violence, primary prevention programs engage the whole community to be a part of the solution.

CT NOW supports this bill because we believe that it will help colleges and universities do a better job of supporting victims of sexual violence and preventing violence from occurring in the first place.

Thank you.