



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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Testimony of Michelle Cruz, State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Thursday, February 10, 2011

Good morning Senator Bye, Representative Willis and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. For the record, my name is Michelle Cruz and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

Raised Senate Bill No. 847, An Act Concerning the Elimination of Sexual Violence on College Campuses (SUPPORT)

I would first like to thank the Committee for putting forth this proposal. As is the case with many federal initiatives, the Jeanne Clery Act provides a skeletal model for institutions of higher education for the reporting and response to criminal incidents, including sexual assault, on campus. It is well known that many victims of sexual assault do not report the assault against them for a variety of reasons, including shame, embarrassment and fear. Coupled with the institutions' desires to maintain low crime reporting rates, sexual assault victims are even less likely to report a sexual assault offense committed on campus. In fact, during 2009, only four completed rapes and one attempted rape were reported by Central CT State University, Eastern CT State University; Southern CT State University, Western CT State University, University of CT (Storrs) and Yale University.¹ Do any of us really think that there were only five sexual assaults in six major universities for an entire year?

The Campus Report Card², published by CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. in January of 2007, recommended practices for adoption by institutions of higher education in the areas of policies, education and training, residential life, campus response teams, campus safety, victim services and judicial board and hearing process.

Additionally, in 2008, the Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) queried all institutions of higher education in the state regarding the policies and procedures adopted by the institution for the reporting of crime on campus. Although the OVA did not limit the inquiry to policies and procedures for reports of sexual assault and intimate partner violence, the OVA did query the institutions for a separate policy specific to the reporting of and response to sexual assault offenses. Through the OVA's inquiry, policy deficiencies were identified, similar to the recommended practices of the 2006 study.

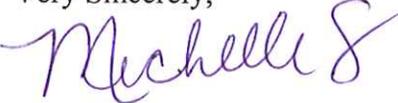
Raised Senate Bill No. 847 will advance the intent of the Clery Act by providing specific direction to institutions of higher education for adopting and implementing

¹ The Department of Public Safety; 2009 Crime in Connecticut; Offense and Arrest Data

² 2006 Survey conducted by the CT College Consortium Against Sexual Assault

policies and procedures for the report of and response to incidents of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Simply stated, the proposal will put “meat on the bones” of the Clery Act. We can continue to talk about sexual assault and do nothing, or we can acknowledge the significant problem of the lack of reporting incidents of sexual assault and intimate partner violence on campuses across the state. This proposal is a teaching opportunity that we cannot pass up.

I strongly urge the Committee’s support of this important proposal. Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Very Sincerely,


Michelle Cruz, Esq.
State Victim Advocate