

Testimony for Victoria Flagg

in support of S.B No. 847 *An Act Concerning the Elimination of Sexual Violence on College Campuses*

My name is Victoria Flagg from Trumbull, CT and I am testifying in support of SB 847, *An Act Concerning the Elimination of Sexual Violence on College Campuses*. I am an eighth semester senior at the University of Connecticut. I am a student worker at the Women's Center, and I am trained as a peer educator with the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP). I am trained to know about the definition of consent and what constitutes intimate partner abuse and sexual assault because of my work with VAWPP, but I also can speak to the severity of the issue because of my personal experience with sexual abuse. When I was in my freshman year of college, I was in a mentally abusive and sexually coercive relationship that lasted nearly two years. People always think that abusive relationships are defined by solely physical violence, but sexual abuse by an intimate partner is just as controlling and damaging to a person. I got out of my relationship, but I really only survived because I was so active in and supported by the Women's Center and the Violence Against Women Prevention Program. I was immersed in an atmosphere that told me that I wasn't to blame, that what I experienced was in fact rape, coercion and abuse, and it gave me an outlet to support others. S.B No. 847 would provide a universally supportive atmosphere to others on college campuses and prevent this violence from happening in the first place.

Prevention is the key to this issue, and this bill would support programming that would successfully prevent cases of sexual assault and intimate partner violence because most college students don't understand the meaning of abuse and assault. This means that potential perpetrators are never told not to be violent or abusive. Victims and survivors have been taught how to avoid abuse and assault when they see it and when it happens to them, but that doesn't stop the violence because it doesn't get to the root of the problem. The root of the problem is that the violence happens in the first place, and preventative programming would start to stop the violence. You don't tell shop owners not to open their doors to people because people will steal, because the more effective way to prevent stealing is to instead tell people not to steal. I fully believe that this bill is incredibly important to the future protection of students on college and university campuses from intimate partner violence and sexual assault. It's time that we stop blaming victims and take the steps to keep violence from happening at all.