



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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**Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services
In Support of HB 6633, An Act Concerning Stalking**
Anna Doroghazi, Director of Public Policy and Communication
Judiciary Committee, March 30, 2011

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary 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 year, advocates throughout the state provided services to 5,190 victims of sexual violence and their loved ones. For some of these victims, the trauma of sexual violence was compounded by the experience of being stalked by their offender. Based on our work with these victims, we would like to testify in support of HB 6633, An Act Concerning Stalking.

There are strong connections between stalking and sexual violence. Some sexual offenders monitor or follow their victims prior to an assault, and others repeatedly contact their victims after an assault has taken place. Similarly, some stalkers use sexual violence or the threat of sexual violence to control and intimidate their victims. Research from the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Institute of Justice found that of the 3.4 million Americans who were stalked during a twelve-month period, 54,785 of those victims were also raped or sexually assaulted by their stalker.¹

Stalking is much better understood now than it was in 1992 when Connecticut's stalking statutes [Sec. 53a-181(c)(d)(e)] were enacted. Since that time, research has revealed the intense psychological, emotional, and financial impact that stalking can have on victims and survivors. Current Connecticut law only applies to victims who feel fear for their own *physical* safety, yet we now know that nearly 25% of stalking victims have their property damaged by an offender and that more than half of victims live in fear of their stalker causing harm to themselves, their child, or another family member.² We know that nearly one in three victims accrue expenses as a result of being stalked, and one in eight lose time from work.³ Some offenders prey on their victims in the workplace, making victims fearful that their employment is in jeopardy. HB 6633 would ensure that Connecticut law addresses these very real concerns.

Based on the national prevalence of stalking, an estimated 49,256 Connecticut residents are stalked each year.⁴ Despite this high incidence of victimization, Connecticut's stalking

¹ Katrina Baum et al., (2009). "Stalking Victimization in the United States," (Washington, DC: BJS, 2009).

² *Ibid*

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Ibid* and U.S. Census Bureau (2009)

SB 6633, An Act Concerning Stalking

An explanation of how the passage of HB 6633 would change Connecticut's stalking law.

CURRENT STALKING LAW

| Stalking in the first degree |
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| The offender commits stalking in the second degree AND... |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">the offender has been previously convicted of stalking in the first or second degree (OR)such conduct violates a court order (OR)the victim is under age sixteen |
| Stalking in the first degree is a class D felony |

| Stalking in the second degree |
|---|
| The offender intends to make the victim feel fear for their physical safety by... |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">willfully and repeatedly following or lying in wait for the victim and causes the victim to feel fear for his/her physical safety |
| Stalking in the second degree is a class A misdemeanor |

| Stalking in the third degree |
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| The offender recklessly (without specific intent) makes the victim feel fear for their physical safety by... |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">willfully and repeatedly following or lying in wait for the victim and causes the victim to feel fear for his/her physical safety |
| Stalking in the second degree is a class B misdemeanor |

HB 6633 CHANGES (IN BOLD)

| Stalking in the first degree |
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| The offender commits stalking in the second or third degree AND... |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">the offender has been previously convicted of stalking in the second or third degree (OR)such conduct violates a court order (OR)the victim is under age thirteen |
| Stalking in the first degree is a class C felony |

| Stalking in the second degree |
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| The offender intends to make the victim feel fear for their physical safety by... |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">willfully and repeatedly following or lying in wait for the victim and causes the victim to feel fear for his/her physical safety (OR)if the offender is twenty-one or older, he or she follows a victim who is under age sixteen or engages in a course of conduct or commits repeated acts that make the victim feel reasonable fear for his/her physical safety |
| Stalking in the second degree is a class D felony |

| Stalking in the third degree |
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| The offender engages in a course of conduct directed at a person and should know that such conduct: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">is likely to make the victim feel fear for the physical health, safety, or property of the victim, the victim's immediate family, or a third party with whom the victim is acquaintedcould cause mental or emotional distress to the victim and the conduct consists of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">following the victim in person or using an electronic device to follow the victiminitiating communication or contact with the victim, a member of the victim's immediate family, or a third party acquaintance of the victim after being warned that such contact is unwantedis likely to cause the victim to fear for his/her job, business, or career and such conduct consists of showing up at, phoning, or trying to contact the victim at work |
| Stalking in the second degree is a class A misdemeanor |