



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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**Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services expressing concern about
HB 6367, An Act Concerning the Failure of a Witness to Report a Serious Crime**

Judiciary Committee, March 9, 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 at Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is the statewide association of Connecticut's nine community-based rape crisis programs. During the last fiscal year, advocates throughout the state provided services to 5,190 victims of sexual violence and their loved ones, almost half of whom had experienced some form of child sexual abuse. Based upon our experience working with these survivors, we would like to express our concerns about HB 6367.

Child sexual abuse is a unique crime. Perpetrators use various forms of manipulation and intimidation to silence their victims, and many victims wait years or even decades to disclose the abuse that they endured. Some child victims fear that reporting their abuse will lead to further injury at the hands of their perpetrator, but many stay silent because they are embarrassed or because they don't think that anyone will believe them. Some victims worry that they will get in trouble if they tell anyone about the abuse, and others conceal their victimization in an effort to keep their families together or avoid additional upheaval in their lives. The dynamics of child sexual abuse and disclosure are complicated by the fact that in an overwhelming majority of cases, children are abused by a family member or another known and trusted adult.

Given these barriers to disclosure, CONNSACS is concerned about how HB 6367 might unintentionally harm victims of child sexual abuse. It is not uncommon for abused children to witness or be aware of their offender harming another child, but that does not make it any easier for these children to report their perpetrator's behavior. Although HB 6367 establishes an affirmative defense in cases where the victim believes that reporting a crime "would have exposed the defendant or another person to substantial risk of physical injury," many factors beyond fear of physical injury compel young victims to avoid disclosure. Because HB 6367 does not include any age exemptions, young victims/witnesses of child sexual abuse could be held responsible for failing to report knowledge of a crime.

Thank you for considering our concerns with HB 6367.

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