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Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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**Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services
In Support of SB 913, An Act Mandating Employers Provide
Paid Sick Leave to Employees**

Anna Doroghazi, Director of Public Policy and Communication
Labor and Public Employees Committee, March 1, 2011

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees 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. Based on our experience working with victims and survivors of sexual violence, we support SB 913, An Act Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees.

Having access to paid sick leave would benefit survivors of sexual violence as they confront both the immediate and long-term consequences of their victimization. During their assaults, 31.5% of female and 16.5% of male rape victims sustain physical injuries such as scratches, bruises, sore muscles, broken bones, and chipped teeth.¹ In the days following an assault, victims may have to confront the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection. In the long-term, survivors of sexual violence face increased rates of substance abuse, eating disorders, depression, and sleep disorders. The possible repercussions of victimization can take a lifetime to overcome, yet many survivors cannot afford to take even a single day off of work.

44% of private sector workers in Connecticut do not have paid sick days,² and when these workers are the victims of sexual violence, many have to choose between receiving the care they need to heal and the income they need to survive. Imagine how it might feel to choose between a day of income and a day of rest following a sexual assault. Think of how difficult it must be to choose between taking your child to counseling and earning the money necessary for your child's continued care. SB 913 would allow victims and survivors of sexual violence to use paid sick time to recover from physical injuries, receive counseling, obtain services from a victim services organization, relocate away from their offender, or participate in legal proceedings related to their assault.

While SB 913 is of obvious benefit to victims and survivors of sexual violence, it also has positive implications for our society as a whole. Providing victims of rape and sexual

¹ Tjaden and Thoennes. *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Rape Victimization: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. NCJ 210346. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2006.

² The National Partnership for Women and Families. *Everyone Gets Sick. Everyone Needs Time to Get Better*. Washington, DC: National Partnership for Women and Families, April 2008.

assault with a few paid days off of work is a sensible business proposition. 19% of Connecticut residents will experience some form of sexual violence during their lifetime,³ and these survivors hold jobs in engineering, food services, finance, education, healthcare, and public service. When survivors of sexual violence cannot afford the time to heal from their assault, employers lose money in the form of lost productivity and employee turnover. Providing workers with paid sick days also has implications for public safety. It can take years for a sexual assault case to go to trial, and victims may be required to spend time speaking to investigators and prosecutors in order to build a case against their offender. Victims may also be asked to testify during trials, which last an average of five days.⁴ Our communities are safer when victims do not have to choose between earning a paycheck and prosecuting a sexual offender.

Providing victims of rape and sexual violence with a few days off of work makes sense. It promotes a healthy workforce and encourages the prosecution of criminals. It is one small thing that our state can do to support victims of sexual violence during their time of crisis. I hope you will join CONNSACS in supporting SB 913.

Thank you for your consideration.

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³ Macro International, Inc. *Sexual Assault Attitudes and Experiences Study*. Burlington, VT: Marco International, 2000.

⁴ Mize, Hannaford-Agor, and Waters. *The State-of-the-States Survey of Jury Improvement Efforts: A Compendium Report*. Arlington, VA: National Center for State Courts, April 2007.