

Testimony of Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury Sexual Assault Crisis Center
In Support of HB 5031, An Act Concerning Sexual Violence on College Campuses
Heather Francisco, Adult Advocate/Legislative Liaison
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement, March 6, 2012

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and honorable members of the Committee, my name is Heather Francisco. I am the adult advocate and legislative liaison for Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury Sexual Assault Crisis Services. Safe Haven is a member of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). Since I have taken over this position I have worked with many men and women who have experienced sexual assault. A number of those cases involve assaults that occurred on a collage campus. Based on that work, I would like to offer our support for **HB 5031, An Act Concerning Sexual Violence on College Campuses**.

I recently responded to a hospital call for a young woman who was raped on a collage campus in CT. This woman was scared and had little knowledge of her rights or the policies the school had on sexual assaults. This young modest woman was horrified by the events that occurred. She was unsure about reporting what happened and hesitant to even have evidence collected. **HB 5031, An Act Concerning Sexual Violence on College Campuses** could help individuals in the same position as my client to be aware of information about reporting, available resources, and options for safety planning after an assault. This primary prevention and awareness can prevent sexual assaults before they occur.

Primary prevention programming encourages students to examine the social norms that support violence and asks them to take an active role in its prevention. It empowers all students to step in and hold their peers accountable for words and actions that lead to violence. Primary prevention education has the potential to change the culture of a campus and make it a safer place for learning. Awareness programming sends a message to students and staff that the institution takes sexual assault seriously. If victims believe that their campus will respond to their victimization in a fair and sensitive manner, they are much more likely to reach out for assistance and take steps to hold their offender accountable before he or she can perpetrate other crimes.

Thank you for considering this important piece of legislation. We hope that you will join us in supporting HB 5031.

Heather Francisco
Adult Advocate/Legislative Liaison
Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury
Phone: (203) 753 – 3613
Email: h.francisco65@comcast.net