

Rape Crisis Center of Milford, Inc.

*Serving Ansonia, Derby,
Milford, Orange, Seymour,
Shelton, & West Haven*

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Testimony of the Rape Crisis Center of Milford, Inc.
**In support of HB 5031, AN ACT CONCERNING SEXUAL VIOLENCE
ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES**
Ann Fabian, Executive Director, The Rape Crisis Center of Milford
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement, March 6, 2012

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and honorable members of the Committee, my name is Ann Fabian, and I am writing on behalf of the Rape Crisis Center of Milford in support of HB 5031. The Rape Crisis Center of Milford provides free and confidential 24-7 sexual assault crisis services and prevention to our community. Our service area includes the cities and towns of Ansonia, Derby, Milford, Orange, Seymour, Shelton, and West Haven. Although all of our services are vital to the community, I would like to take this time to explain why the prevention education requirements outlined in HB 5031 are essential to the work that we do.

One of the goals of HB 5031 is to provide primary prevention and awareness programming to all incoming students and new faculty members. The programming would include definitions of consent as well as information about the options following an assault. This type of programming is vital to our work at the Center.

A 2001 study by the Bureau of Justice found that **48.8% of college women who had experiences that met this study's definition of rape did not consider what happened to them as rape.** This statistic is hugely illuminating. As a provider of crisis services, we recognize that there are a variety of reasons that someone may not have identified their experience as a sexual assault. One of the biggest reasons may be that the student is minimizing their own experience. The media's portrayal of sexual violence perpetuates false ideas about sexual assault constantly. For example, most victims in NBC's Law and Order: Special Victims Unit are attacked by a stranger in Central Park or a subway platform. They are brutally beaten, many times with the bruises and cuts still visible in the court proceedings. The cases that we hear about most in our own police blotters mirror these types of attacks. However, we know that these cases are the minority—in most cases, the perpetrator is someone known to the victim and the use of physical force is minimal.

The danger in these myths is that if a student's attack was anything less than the Law and Order portrayal of rape, they feel as though their experience was not 'the real thing'. These victims are left to deal with these confusing feelings on their own, unaware of the services that are available on their own campus.

By requiring primary prevention education to all incoming students, college communities can ensure that students are getting a fuller (and thereby better) definition of sexual assault which will include definitions of consent and state definitions of each degree of sexual assault, as well as outlining the resources available to students following an assault. This explicit definition will be one that encompasses more experiences, helping students to not only gain a better understanding about the nature of sexual violence, but also to recognize offices on campus that can provide accommodations to better support the victim.

As an organization that provides direct services to college students in our service area, we thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 5031.

Sincerely,

Ann Fabian
Executive Director
March 2, 2012

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