

Testimony of Krystal Rich, Adult Advocate for the Sexual Assault Crisis Service of New Britain
In Support of HB 5031, An Act Concerning Sexual Violence on College Campuses
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement, March 6, 2012

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and honorable members of the Committee, my name is Krystal Rich and I am the Adult Advocate for the Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS), a program of the YWCA New Britain as well as an alumni from Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). As one of the Adult Advocates for an organization that serves primary and secondary sexual assault victims in the Hartford county, Plymouth and parts of Tolland county, I have seen first-hand the horrendous effects this crime has on survivors and their supports. Today I am speaking to you as not only the Adult Advocate for SACS, but as a survivor who was sexual assaulted at Central Connecticut State University while I was a student there. Based on my work as an advocate and as someone who has experienced sexual violence on a college campus, I would like to offer our support for **HB 5031, An Act Concerning Sexual Violence on College Campuses**.

As a survivor of sexual assault during my time at CCSU, I recognize the importance of knowing what resources are available, what a university's disciplinary process is, and how to form a safety plan. When I was assaulted in February of 2010, I was not aware of what resources were available to me and as a result was bounced around from department to department. I also did not realize that, at the time, CCSU did not even have a sexual assault policy to protect me and as a result I had to jump through hoops to resolve my case and never even knew if I was being treated fairly. I was later told by a university official that if I had not gone to the police they still would have kept my perpetrator employed at the university. In terms of safety planning, I was forced to walk to classes while my perpetrator walked freely across the campus. It was not until I pushed that he was no longer allowed in the building where my classes were located. Since 2010, CCSU has taken a lot of steps to address some of the problems that came to light during my case; however there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. Being sexually assaulted is traumatizing enough and there is no reason why students should not be given all of the information of the available resources, information on the disciplinary process, or help with safety planning. I know that having this bill would push schools to get this information out there to students as well as working on prevention efforts to stop this crime before it even occurs.

A research study that I was involved in conducting at CCSU in the Fall of 2011 found that over 32%, of the 2900 students who completed the survey, had experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetime. When asked, if they had a sexual assault experience did they report it: 23% said that they did not because they "felt nothing would be done about it" and 21% felt that "complaining about the situation would make it worse." When asked if they would know where to go to report a case of sexual violence, 35.6% said they did not know where to go. An overwhelming 32% of the sample stated that they felt that University was not doing a satisfactory job in educating the students around sexual harassment/violence. These numbers clearly show that there is a lack of information being provided to students despite the fact that many students are being affected by this crime at our own local University.

HB 5031 will be able to address the concerns of allowing students to have information on reporting as well as giving them the information about their available resources by requiring this

of the universities. Of course, this bill will also make an enormous impact by requiring universities to address primary prevention. Primary prevention may indeed be the single most important piece because these programs aim to stop sexual violence before it even happens. Primary prevention can change the climate by teaching communities how to address perpetrator attitudes and behavior before they escalate to a violent act. Sadly, I know that if there had been more of a focus on primary prevention at CCSU prior to my assault, there is a good chance I would not be standing here testifying as victim/survivor today. I hope that you can see how imperative this bill is in stopping sexual violence from happening before another assault occurs on one of our college campuses.

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

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