

Testimony of Megan Zoglio, University of New Haven Student and CONNSACS Intern
In Support of HB 5031, *An Act Concerning Sexual Violence on College Campuses*
Joint Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement, March 6, 2012

Senator Bye, Representative Willis and respected members of the Committee, my name is Megan Zoglio and I am an intern at Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.(CONNSACS). I am also an undergraduate at the University of New Haven, where I am studying Criminal Justice. I stand firmly behind HB 5031: An Act Concerning the Elimination of Sexual Violence on College Campuses.

Starting a college career should yield new experiences, friends and academic challenges. Exploring a new realm of academia, and unfamiliar territory, poses numerous opportunities for adventure. This experience, however, should not be scarring, terrifying, or lonely. Students should feel safe and secure on their college campus. HB 5031 would ensure this safety by being a catalyst for social change. Campuses fostering respect, accountability, and social change will be safer, more nurturing institutions.

As a young woman attending college, I cannot help but notice the culture in which we live. Young people are desensitized to the word “rape,” as they toss the word around in casual conversation: they “rape” a friend in a video game, as if it means “defeat.” They speak of rape as if it has no other meaning, and completely disregard the terror and violence associated with rape. Desensitizing encourages violence by allowing people to think there is nothing wrong with rape. By passing HB 5031, education and primary prevention initiatives would be mandatory. Primary prevention identifies attitudes that support sexual violence, and aims to dispel them. This assists in preventing sexual violence in a proactive, instead of a reactive, manner. Through education, we can promote change, while also fighting societal norms that promote sexual violence. Primary prevention empowers people with knowledge, and encourages change, ultimately avoiding the initial perpetration of violence.

HB 5031’s provisions also protect victims of sexual assault and intimate partner violence by mandating universities to outline the protocols to follow after an assault occurs. It supports victims, and makes it more likely that perpetrators will be held accountable. Victims of such horrible acts could feel more comfortable reaching out to their university for assistance, and the faculty and staff could better serve them, in order to lessen the trauma of the aftermath. Reporting becomes easier and less traumatizing, while also protecting victims from further victimization. By passing HB 5031, you prevent the future victimization of students, support those who have been victimized, and spread hope for university communities that sexual violence is intolerable and preventable.