

Testimony of the Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County
In Support of HB 5031, An Act Concerning Sexual Violence on College Campuses
Samantha Bayuk, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Advocate
Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement, March 6, 2012

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and honorable members of the Committee, my name is Samantha Bayuk and I am a Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Advocate at the Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County (CWFEFC). CWFEFC is one of five dual agencies throughout the state of Connecticut that provides Domestic and Sexual Violence Victim Services and Prevention Education to residents of Eastern Fairfield County. These towns include Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford and Trumbull. During the last fiscal year, CWFEFC provided services to 240 victims of sexual violence and their loved ones. In addition to providing crisis counseling services, we also work closely with colleges and universities in our area on education and prevention, as well as ensuring that victims/survivors on their campuses are able to acquire the services they need after an assault, in a fair and respectful manner. Based on that work, we would like to offer our support for **HB 5031, An Act Concerning Sexual Violence on College Campuses**.

Research has consistently shown that up to 25% of women will be victims of sexual violence during their college careers.¹ The majority of these sexually violent crimes are perpetrated by someone the victim knows. In fact, it is reported that 70%² of victims knew their attackers. The majority of attackers have been reported to be classmates or significant others³. Of these victims, most will never report, for a multitude of reasons, including, but not limited to the following: not wanting other people to know (47%), fear of being treated with hostility by the police (25%), fear of retaliation (40%), not believing that the incident was serious enough to report (65%), and not knowing how to report (14%).⁴

Currently at CWFEFC, we work closely with the colleges and universities in our area to build and improve their sexual assault response teams and policies. Most recently, we have had advocates and community educators on campus at Sacred Heart University and University of Bridgeport, attending their Sexual Misconduct and Response Team (SMART) and Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Team (SARPT), respectively, assisting in cleaning up and building response policies. Our Community Education department is currently working with Sacred Heart University (SHU) on developing a Consent Workshop to present to incoming

¹ Hirsch, Kathleen. "Fraternities of Fear: Gang Rape, Male Bonding, and the Silencing of Women." Ms.Magazine, 2000: 1(2) 52-56.

² Dennison, Callie. Criminal Victimization 1998. Bureau of Justice Stats, DOJ

³ Fisher, B.S., F.T. Cullen, and M.G. Turner. "The Sexual Victimization of College Women." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics and National Institute of Justice, 2000, NCJ 182369. 19.

⁴ *Ibid*

Freshmen during their Orientation Weekend. From what we have seen, by working hand-in-hand with these colleges, is that many of them have limited resources to fund the necessary programming needed in order to raise awareness about prevention and consent. Due to the lack of budgeting allotted for these programs, most colleges and universities have outdated and fairly weak sexual violence prevention and response methods – this means that not only are students not aware of the resources available to them should they need them, but they also were not given the proper prevention education going in to their first year, or any time after. This lack of education, as we have seen on college campuses, has also led to many misconceptions about sexual violence, and victim blame, which can have a very large impact on whether or not a victim/survivor reports the assault.

HB 5031, if passed, would require colleges and universities to provide the primary prevention education that has been so lacking in recent years. What this means is that all incoming students, as well as new faculty and staff would be educated on the definition of consent, information about reporting sexual violence, the definition of bystander intervention and how you, as a bystander can help, and risk reduction. This bill would also provide room for ongoing sexual assault and intimate partner violence (IPV) prevention awareness campaigns. What this means is that not only would first year students be provided with the resources and education, but continued education and prevention would be available throughout their college careers. This continuation of education is an important key in keeping awareness up and helping to prevent further sexual violence on campus.

As an advocate, I have seen my fair share of cases involving college women who have been victims of sexual violence, both on and off campus. Most of these women are too afraid to come forward because they are afraid of the stigma, the potential for publicity and many times do not even know where to go to report. Most women, too, have stated they do not report because nothing had been done in prior cases on their campus that had been reported. I myself am a recent college graduate, and was enrolled in school during multiple sexually violent incidents that had been reported and improperly dealt with, not only on one but both campuses at which I had attended school. Through personal and professional experience, it has been made very clear to me that not only is there a lack of prevention education, but also a lack of proper disciplinary and judiciary proceedings on campus. Many campus judicial hearings often re-victimize the survivors who have come forward, which was the case in my own sexual assault hearing at the first college I attended. Without proper training of the campus officials holding the judicial hearings, many victims find themselves getting blamed for their own victimization. This then often causes them to have to hash out details in a very insensitive and emotionally painful manner.

HB 5031 is important because it would give students more resources as to where and how to report, as well as mandate that the disciplinary proceedings be conducted by a professional, trained in issues related to sexual and intimate partner violence. HB 5031 would also give

students enough resources to make them aware of how students are supposed to be treated during the proceedings. This would help students to better avoid being re-victimized by a campus trial and judicial process.

Giving students the resources, knowledge, and services they need, and deserve, in times of such personal violation, and in situations that raise so much potential fear of further harm and retaliation is incredibly important.

Thank you for considering this important piece of legislation. It is our hope, here at The Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County, that you will join us in supporting HB 5301.

Samantha Bayuk

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Advocate

The Center for Women and Families of Eastern Fairfield County

Phone: (203) 334-6153 Extension 32

E-Mail: sbayuk@cwfeffc.org