CONN SACS

Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.
Anna Doroghazi, Director of Public Policy and Communication
Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health Committees
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Good morning, co-chairs and members of the Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health Committees. My name is Anna Doroghazi, and I am the Director of Public Policy and Communication at Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is the coalition of Connecticut's nine community-based sexual assault crisis services programs. Last year, advocates at these nine programs and in sex offender supervision units provided services to nearly 7,000 victims of sexual violence and their loved ones, an almost twenty percent increase over last year. The important services that these advocates provide to victims in crisis would not be possible without state and federal funding, including the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant. CONNSACS would like to express our appreciation for the rape crisis funding in the FFY 2013 Block Grant Allocation Plan and provide you with more information about how those funds are used to support victims of sexual violence.

In Connecticut, the Block Grant's Sex Offense Set-Aside for rape crisis services goes directly to CONNSACS and is used by the coalition to support the work of sexual assault crisis services programs. Our nine member programs serve every town and city in Connecticut and provide crisis intervention; individual and group counseling; medical, police, and court accompaniment; and 24/7 English and Spanish-language hotlines for victims of rape and other sexual assaults. The coalition manages the Spanish-language hotline, keeps advocates informed of laws and policies that directly impact victims, coordinates a victim/survivor advisory council, promotes statewide programs that improve the medical and legal responses to victims, and develops and maintains appropriate standards of service for member programs.

The proposed FFY 2013 Block Grant expenditure of $79,914 for rape crisis services is equal to estimated FFY 2012 expenditures but represents a 4.2% cut from FFY 2011 expenditures. CONNSACS, like many other nonprofit organizations in Connecticut, has seen an increased need for its free services during the recession, and we are committed to meeting the needs of the victims and survivors who seek our services following a sexual assault. We understand the need for shared sacrifice during these difficult economic times, but we are thankful that no further cuts are proposed to our Block Grant funding.

While the Block Grant is an important piece of funding, it is not nearly enough to support all the work of the coalition and the more than one-hundred advocates who work with victims statewide. CONNSACS and its member programs also rely heavily on the Department of Public Health's rape crisis line item in the state budget. Every dollar of funding that CONNSACS receives is vital to its continued ability to serve victims and move closer to a world without sexual violence.

Thank you for this opportunity to share how the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant supports CONNSACS and our work to serve victims of sexual violence. If you would like additional information about CONNSACS, our member programs, or our services, please contact me at the phone number or email address below.

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