

Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services
In Support of HB 6570, An Act Concerning Voyeurism
Anna Doroghazi, Director of Public Policy and Communication
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing, Wednesday, March 13, 2013

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee: my name is Anna Doroghazi, and I am the Director of Public Policy and Communication for Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is the coalition of Connecticut's nine community-based sexual assault crisis services programs, which provide sexual assault counseling and victim advocacy to men, women, and children of all ages. During our last fiscal year, advocates throughout the state provided hospital and court accompaniment, support groups, individual counseling, 24/7 hotline support, and post-conviction services to over 7,000 victims and survivors of sexual violence. We would like to express our support for HB 6570, *An Act Concerning Voyeurism* but recommend that the Committee strengthen Connecticut's voyeurism statutes using language from SB 871, *An Act Concerning Revisions to Various Statutes Concerning the Criminal Justice System*. SB 871 is similar in concept to HB 6570 but includes a much-needed tolling provision for voyeuristic acts that are recorded.

Voyeurism is not a victimless crime, and it has real emotional, psychological, and financial consequences for victims. Advocates at Connecticut's sexual assault crisis services programs have worked with clients who were viewed, videotaped, or photographed without their knowledge or consent, and these victims experience many of the same feelings of betrayal, fear, and shame that sexual assault survivors experience. One voyeurism survivor who sought services at a CONNSACS' member program was recorded by an ex-boyfriend in her bedroom and bathroom for over a year before she discovered that he had been sending videos of her to her friends and acquaintances. She was so humiliated and felt so unsafe in her home that she was forced to move and nearly lost her job because the trauma of the experience impacted her ability to focus at work.

Because of the level of harm that voyeurism victims experience, we support expanding the offense to better hold offenders accountable when they commit simple trespass and violate a person's privacy in order to satisfy a sexual desire (Section 1). We also support treating voyeurism like other sexual offenses and acknowledging the increased harm of victimizing a minor (Section 2) and the need to include voyeurs on the sex offender registry (Section 3).

Although HB 6570 strengthens protections for voyeurism victims, we do not believe it goes far enough. SB 871 includes a tolling provision that allows voyeurism to be prosecuted five years from the date on which the victim discovers the existence of a photograph, film, videotape, or other recording. In our digital age, the passage of time can amplify the harm of voyeurism. Photographs and videos can be disseminated with great ease, and by the time victims realize that their privacy has been violated, unauthorized and compromising photos can be spread literally around the world. These images and videos can impact victims' reputations and hurt their ability to find work or advance their careers; this harm does not have an expiration date, and victims

should have the option of pursuing justice once they discover that their privacy has been violated.

If the Committee chooses to move forward with the language of SB 871 instead of HB 6570, we would suggest that SB 871 be expanded to better protect *all* victims of voyeurism regardless of an offender's motivation. SB 871 would add a tolling provision only for voyeurism offenses in which the offender acts with malice as provided in subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of Sec. 53a-189a. We strongly believe that there should also be a tolling provision in place for offenses in which offenders act "with intent to arouse or satisfy the sexual desire of such person or any other person," as provided in subdivision (2) of subsection (a). The discovery of unauthorized and prurient images is traumatic for victims regardless of their offenders' motivations.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of this important issue. CONNSACS supports the Committee's efforts to examine and improve Connecticut's voyeurism statutes in both SB 871 and HB 6570, and we would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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