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**March 25, 2013**  
**Judiciary Committee**  
**Testimony in Favor of Bill No. 6641**

On behalf of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Organization for Women (CT NOW), we would like to express our support for House Bill 6641, *An Act Concerning the Sexual Assault of Persons Whose Ability to Communicate Lack of Consent is Substantially Impaired*.

Sexual consent is an important issue that can be difficult to navigate especially when coupled with questions of ability. CT NOW recognizes this, and is particularly concerned after learning about the statistic that the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) found in 2007, which asserts that persons with a disability have an age-adjusted rate of rape or sexual assault that is more than twice the rate for persons without a disability. Considering that rape and sexual assault is already underreported for the non-disabled population, it is likely that this number is even higher for people with disabilities; as they would not or could not report their assault.

We appreciate the elimination of the term "mentally defective," as that connotes a type of inferiority that should not be associated with a person's other abilities.

We are pleased to see clarifying language on the definition of physically helpless. We agree that the definition should include the inability to "resist an act of sexual intercourse or sexual contact". Currently, the definition only addresses a person who is unconsciousness or who has a physical inability to communicate. However, one could be conscious and able to communicate, but constrained in a way that prevented resistance.

CT NOW hopes that the bill's proposed changes will help delineate the line of sexual assault, and make clear the definitions of mentally or physically impaired. We find it offensive that the statute under which we operate today allows perpetrators to sexually assault disabled women without consequence.

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