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Milford, Orange, Seymour,
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Testimony of Cynthia Dugan, Counselor/Advocate In Support of HB6641, An Act Concerning the Sexual Assault of Persons Whose Ability To Communicate Lack of Consent is Substantially Impaired Judiciary Committee Public Hearing

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Cindy Dugan. I am a counselor/advocate for the Rape Crisis Center of Milford, Inc. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of all victims of sexual assault who have survived one of the most terrifying experiences of their lives and still find the strength and courage to come forward to seek help and support. For some, support from one of the nine centers across Connecticut who offer a safe haven to work through the multitude of emotions this crime perpetuates. For others, support not only from a rape crisis center but from law enforcement and ultimately the criminal justice system should they make the difficult decision to report this crime. This is a particularly difficult decision for victims of sexual assault to make. Therefore, when they do it is imperative that laws are structured to offer protection.

Sexual assault is a crime of power and control perpetrated by individuals who look for vulnerability. Persons with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable group of people to become victims of this crime. The Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that if you have a disability you are twice as likely to be sexually assaulted as someone who does not have a disability. I would also offer that people with disabilities would also face increased difficulty reporting this crime.

This bill will close a loophole in the Connecticut criminal statute that has allowed offenders to abuse individuals whose ability to consent is significantly impaired and go unpunished. At the same time it does not create any statutory presumptions that people with disabilities are completely incapable of making a decision to engage in consensual sexual relations.

All victims of sexual assault deserve protection under the law. I urge you to support this extremely important piece of legislation for those who are some of our most vulnerable members of society.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Dugan
Counselor/Advocate
Rape Crisis Center of Milford



United Way