

**Testimony in support of H.B. 6641, AN ACT CONCERNING THE SEXUAL ASSAULT OF PERSONS WHOSE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE LACK OF CONSENT IS SUBSTANTIALLY IMPAIRED**

March 25, 2013

Submitted by Rebekah Diamond

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, members of the committee:

My name is Rebekah Diamond. I am a student at UConn School of Social Work and I have also worked with developmentally disabled adults for the past five years.

Today I am here in support of H.B. 6641, AN ACT CONCERNING THE SEXUAL ASSAULT OF PERSONS WHOSE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE LACK OF CONSENT IS SUBSTANTIALLY IMPAIRED.

In removing the wording "developmentally defective" from the Connecticut General Statutes section 1, Section 53a-71, Section 2. Section 53a-73a, Section 3, Section 53a-65, and Section 4, Section 53a-67 and replacing it with "impaired because of mental disability or disease" I believe we would be returning power to those who have been marginalized for so long.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines defective as, "imperfect in form or function" or "falling below the norm". By using language such as "developmentally defective" within our laws, we are inviting the public to think of those who are disabled as "less than" the rest of us.

Within our country and within our state we have made tremendous strides as we have worked to bring people who are impaired due to mental, physical disability or disease out of the institutions and into the community. But I'm here to say that with language such as "developmentally defective" we are in a way keeping them institutionalized. By defining these individuals as defective we are not allowing them to reach their full potential and to practice their autonomy.

It is up to you, our state's elected officials, to set an example for the rest of the citizenry of Connecticut and remove this derogatory language from legislation: I respectfully urge you to pass this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.