

Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services  
**In Support of HB 6641: Holding Offenders Accountable  
for Sexually Assaulting People with Disabilities**  
Vicky Wasilewski, Interim Hartford Child Advocate

Dear members of the Supreme Court,

My name is Vicky Wasilewski, and I am the Interim Hartford Child Advocate for the Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is the statewide association of Connecticut's nine community-based rape crisis programs. During this last year, our advocates throughout the state have provided services to over 7,000 victims of sexual violence and their loved ones. For some of these victims, their severe mental and/or physical disabilities have caused them to experience grave difficulty when in the process of proving that they were truly sexually assaulted. The current law only defines "physically helpless" as "unable to consent to sexual contact, or that a person must be unconscious or in a state akin to unconsciousness" and that makes it more difficult to prosecute these offenders who have sexually assaulted individuals beyond this diameter. Based on our work with these victims, we would like to testify in support of holding offenders accountable for sexually assaulting people with disabilities.

Among the population of adults with developmental disabilities, as many as 83% of female and 32% of males are victims of sexual assault in their lifetime. Also, 49% of people with developmental disabilities, who are victims of sexual violence, will experience 10 or more abusive incidents, while only 3% of these sexual abuse cases ever get reported. Of the women with disabilities who have been married, 38% experience sexual violence by their partner, 33% by friends or acquaintances, 33% by foster family members, and 25% by caregivers or service providers. This degrading violence needs to stop and offenders of these crimes need to start being held accountable. I believe with the help of HB 6641, we can work towards reevaluating these statistics and helping survivors of sexual assault with disabilities to finally regain their courage and power and reclaim justice for themselves. Individuals who experience sexual assault and have physical and/or developmental disabilities should be given the same rights as everyone else and the empowerment to move and grow beyond that. CONNSACS hopes that you will see the importance of HB 6641 and join us in supporting it.

Thank you for your consideration.