CONN SACS

Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services regarding:
HB 5666, AAC the Forfeiture of Money and Property Related to Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking (Support with Suggestions)

HB 6636, AAC the Collection of Sexual Assault Evidence from an Intoxicated or Incapacitated Victim (Request No Action)

SB 1152, AAC Petition for Release from the Requirement to Register as a Sexual Offender for Life (Oppose)

Anna Doroghazi, Director of Public Policy and Communication
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing, Friday, March 5, 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 offer comments on three bills before the committee today.

HB 5666, AAC the Forfeiture of Money and Property Related to Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking (Support with Suggestions)

According to multiple sources, the global sex industry generates several billion dollars each year. Much of this money does not go to the women and men who are prostituted; rather, it goes into the pockets of pimps. More than 80% of women involved in street-level prostitution work with a pimp at some point, and these pimps often use physical and emotional violence to maintain control over their "employees" and their finances.[1] Abuse also occurs at the hands of johns. A 2003 study of prostitution and human trafficking found that 82% of individuals working in prostitution in the U.S. were physically assaulted in the course of their work. 73% had been raped, and 78% had been threatened with a weapon.[2]

HB 5666 would add prostitution and promoting prostitution in the third degree to the list of offenses that are subject to forfeiture of money and property used in the commission of the crime. CONNSACS supports this legislation insofar as it can be used to punish pimps. We are concerned, however, that it could also be used to seize assets from women and men who are committing the crime of prostitution – even though an overwhelming majority of these individuals are abused and 87% would leave

[1] Celia Williamson and Terry Cluse-Tolar, "Pimp Controlled Prostitution: Still an Integral Part of Street Life," *Violence Against Women* Vol. 8 No. 9 (September 2002): 1075.

[2] Melissa Farley, et al., "Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries: An Update on Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," *Journal of Trauma Practice* Vol. 2 No.3/4 (2003): 43.

prostitution if they felt that it were a realistic option.[3] We hope that the Committee will consider how this bill would impact those individuals and consider the possibility of eliminating prostitution (Sec. 53a-82) from this legislation. We believe that this bill would better serve victims and curb prostitution if it focused solely on the seizure of assets from individuals who promote prostitution (Sec. 53a-88).

HB 6636, AAC the Collection of Sexual Assault Evidence from an Intoxicated or Incapacitated Victim (Request no action)

We support the intent of HB 6636 and recognize its importance, but we do not believe that the raised bill is necessary and respectfully ask the Committee to take no action on it. The Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations ("the Evidence Commission") has a statutory mandated per Sec. 19a – 112a to maintain and regularly update the State of Connecticut Technical Guidelines for Health Care Response to Victims of Sexual Assault ("the Technical Guidelines"). A subcommittee of the Evidence Commission was formed last year to examine the issue of evidence collection from an intoxicated or incapacitated victim and has already met several times. We believe that this subcommittee is close to making recommendations for how to best address this issue in the Technical Guidelines.

CONNSACS has been a member of the Evidence Commission since its inception in 1988, and we are deeply invested in ensuring that sexual assault survivors have access to quality medical care and forensic evidence collection. We appreciate the Committee's interest in this important issue, and we would be happy to provide you with an update on revisions to the Technical Guidelines once they are complete.

SB 1152, AAC Petition for Release from the Requirement to Register as a Sexual Offender for Life (Oppose)

We oppose SB 1152, which would allow convicted offenders to petition for removal from the sexual offender registry after ten years. A majority of sexual offenders are already only required to register for ten years; those who are required to register for life have been convicted of repeat offenses, have raped a child under the age of 13, or have committed a violent sexual offense.

We are especially concerned that the provisions of this bill could be applied retroactively. Registry requirements are, in a sense, a promise made to victims as part of their offenders' sentencing. Survivors of sexual violence deserve to understand the terms and conditions of their offenders' sentencing, and there are currently many survivors in Connecticut who expect their offenders to be on the sexual offender registry for life. We appreciate that Section 1 of the bill allows for the consideration of a victim statement, but it can be difficult and re-traumatizing for victims to have to repeatedly discuss how sexual assault has impacted their lives. Sentences – including sexual offender registry requirements – should not be a source of uncertainty and confusion for sexual assault survivors.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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[3] Melissa Farley, et al., "Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries: An Update on Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," *Journal of Trauma Practice* Vol. 2 No.3/4 (2003): 51.