



Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc.

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Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services
**In Support of SB 158, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE ON THE PREVENTION OF
SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN**

**In Support of SB 821, AN ACT CONCERNING RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANDATED
REPORTERS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Anna Doroghazi, Director of Public Policy and Communication
Thursday, February 14, 2013

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Select Committee on Children: 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. Over 1,100 of these victims were children and adolescents. Based on our experience and expertise working with survivors of child sexual abuse and their families, we would like to offer our support of SB 158 and SB 821.

We support **SB 158, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE ON THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN** because one in four girls and one in six boys will experience some form of sexual abuse before their 18th birthday, and these children deserve information that could help them identify abuse and safely reach out for help. When responsible adults do not take the time to educate children about abuse, that education is left in the hands of abusers; when education is left to abusers, children hear that the abuse is normal or that the abuse is the child's fault or that something bad will happen if the abuse is disclosed.

CONNSACS would appreciate the opportunity to participate on any task force that examines child sexual abuse prevention and makes recommendations about education and curriculum. CONNSACS and local sexual assault crisis services programs have been providing educational programs to schools and communities for three decades. We understand from our experience that in order to be effective, child abuse prevention education must address the realities of *all* children, including children who face oppression and abuse both at home and within their communities.

Our experience has also taught us that preventing child sexual abuse requires a comprehensive education that goes beyond teaching children about safe touch and how to ask for help. Like other leading voices in the anti-sexual violence movement, we are strong proponents of primary prevention education, a strategy that aims to prevent sexual abuse by providing a framework for healthy relationships and addressing oppressive and aggressive attitudes before they become violent actions. We think that there is great potential to educate Connecticut children in a way would help them identify abuse, respond to abuse when it occurs, and create a culture that will not tolerate violence.

We would also like to offer our support for **SB 821, AN ACT CONCERNING RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANDATED REPORTERS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT** and changes to the General Statutes that would improve employment protections for employees who report suspected child abuse. In recent years, abuse cover-ups at Penn State and various Catholic dioceses have demonstrated the devastating consequences of individuals and institutions putting their reputations above the interests of children. Employees who want to meet their legal and moral obligation to protect children should be able to do so without interference or retaliation from their employers. In cases that could impact an employer's reputation or implicate an employer in the abuse, employment protections could make it easier for employees to do the right thing and speak out on behalf of abused children.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 158 and SB 821. We appreciate the Committee's efforts to address child sexual abuse prevention and reporting.

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