



Testimony in Support of
HB 5029, AAC Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence on Campus
Higher Education Committee
February 11, 2014

Good morning Senator Cassano, Representative Willis, and members of the committee. My name is Catherine Zeiner. I am the Executive Director of Safe Futures, Inc. formerly known as the Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut, Inc., where we provide services to nearly 6,000 victims of sexual assault and domestic violence every year, in New London County. I am here to **recommend your support of HB 5029, including the substitute language proposed by the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV),** which I have included as an attachment to my testimony.

For more than 30 years, we have been working with colleges, including the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, in southeastern Connecticut, to help educate students and faculty to identify and respond to sexual and intimate partner violence, and more importantly, to prevent such violence on their campuses.

In recent years, we have been active members of the Coordinated Community Response Team at one local college in particular. When the Team first began, sexual assault cases were being handled internally by the Dean; no services were offered to the victim other than to send them to Student

Health; the focus was on the rights of the accused and little attention was paid to the rights of victims; and there were limited or no protocols, policies, or procedures related to cases of sexual assault.

Now, after the Response Team has been in place for a few years, those protocols, policies and procedures are in place – including protocols for when an offender returns to campus – and they are communicated to students. Victims are referred to services, both on and off campus. They have options; their rights are better protected; and faculty and staff understand better how not to re-traumatize the victim. Outreach and awareness-raising events are now sponsored by the college, not just by the students or community groups.

Clearly, the provisions and requirements in this bill, particularly the ones including community resources as part of a Response Team, work to improve the conditions on campus to respond to and prevent sexual and intimate partner violence. Community-based advocates can provide confidentiality protection, bring the expertise gained by handling hundreds, or thousands, of cases a year to the team, and offer the resources and support that may not be adequate on some college campuses due to limited resources.

But, our biggest take-away, from this experience, and our experiences with other local colleges and universities, is that these campus Response Teams need both the expertise of sexual assault victim advocates, and the expertise of domestic violence victim advocates.

Intimate partner violence and dating violence is domestic or family violence. Sexual violence is often a part of that picture, especially on college campuses. Intimate partner relationships are complex – victims want the violence to stop, but may not want the offender kicked out of school; they may be in

fear for their safety, and have nowhere to go without withdrawing from school; they may be coerced into staying in a violent relationship for fear of being outted as being gay, and fearing the backlash from their campus community. These complex relationship issues are the issues that domestic violence providers navigate every day, in scores of cases every day. They have specialized expertise to help campus administrations understand their responsibility to victims because they handle dozens of court cases involving victims' rights. They are skilled at safety planning, and have shelter resources, to support victims who may be at risk for their lives, or in need of support after hours. And most importantly, they are experienced in helping victims understand their options as they work through the web of relationships – with intimate partner, friends, family, faculty, staff, teammates, and other students, who will all continue to be part of their lives – in what to expect, and how to be safe, physically and emotionally.

This bill requires important improvements in how we respond to sexual assault and intimate partner violence on college campuses, an environment where we have underserved victims for far too long. Let's be sure that we are making it the most effective bill possible by including the language proposed by CCADV, and engaging community-based domestic violence agencies in the work as well.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you support this bill with the suggested substitute language.

Thank you.

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**Proposed substitute language for
HB 5029, AAC Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence on Campus**

Section 3 of the bill requires institutions of higher education to establish a trained sexual assault response team for each campus. This will be a vital step to having trained professionals available to address violence on campus. After receiving comprehensive training, the response teams will "develop protocols for providing support and services to any student or employee who reports being the victim of sexual assault or *intimate partner violence*." As such, **we respectfully request that you consider the following additions to allow for the participation of domestic violence agencies:**

- **Line 168 – add “and intimate partner violence” after “assault”** – this will result in a name change of the sexual assault response team to the *Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence Response Team* since the bill calls for the team to respond to both sexual assault and IPV.

The following lines also address the title of the response team:

- **Line 169** – add “and intimate partner violence” after “assault”
 - **Line 181** - add “and intimate partner violence” after “assault”
 - **Line 192** - add “and intimate partner violence” after “assault”
 - **Line 199** - add “and intimate partner violence” after “assault”
 - **Line 217** - add “and intimate partner violence” after “assault”
- **Line 176 – add a new subdivision (3) that includes “a community-based domestic violence agency”** and renumber the remaining subdivisions – this will include the local domestic violence agency on the Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence Response Team as the local domestic violence agency is the only agency with the expertise and government funding to address IPV that either does not encompass or goes beyond sexual assault.
 - **Line 191 – add “and domestic violence” after “assault”** – this ensures that the role of local domestic violence advocates will also be explained to members of the Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence Response Team as the local domestic violence advocate will be the best resource for working with IPV victims.

Section 3 of the bill states that the response team will receive training regarding a “victim-centered response.” We believe it is important to define what this means. As such, **we respectfully request that you consider adding the following definition to Section 2 of the bill:**

“Victim-centered response” means the systematic focus on the needs and concerns of a victim of sexual assault or intimate partner violence that (A) ensures the compassionate and sensitive delivery of services in a nonjudgmental manner, (B) ensures an understanding of how victim trauma affects victim behavior, (C) maintains victim safety, privacy and confidentiality, and (D) recognizes that victims are never responsible for the crimes committed against them and that offenders are always responsible for their crimes.

Section 4 of the bill creates an MOU between institutions of higher education and at least one community-based sexual assault crisis service center to ensure that “any victim of sexual assault or intimate partner violence can access free and confidential counseling and advocacy services...” As such, **we respectfully request that you consider the following additions to allow for the participation of domestic violence agencies:**

- **Line 211 – add “and at least one community-based domestic violence agency” after “center”** – The only agencies funded by state and federal government to respond to IPV that either does not encompass or goes beyond sexual assault are local domestic violence agencies.

To ensure that the community is able to meet the requirements of this section, local domestic violence agencies should be included in the MOU.

The following lines also address the inclusion of the local domestic violence agency in the MOU:

- **Line 215** – add “sexual assault” after “such”; add “and domestic violence agency” after “center”
- **Line 218** – add “sexual assault” after “such”; add “and domestic violence agency” after “center”

With regard to the definition of “intimate partner violence” found in the bill, **we respectfully request the following technical change be made to reference the correct definition of family violence in CT General Statutes:**

- **Line 48** – remove “domestic”; add “family” in front of “violence”; remove “46b-38h”; add “46b-38a” after “section” – CT’s family violence definition includes violence between unrelated persons presently residing together or who have resided together; persons in, or who have recently been in, a dating relationship; persons who have a child in common regardless of whether they are or have been married or lived together at any time.

For questions, please contact:

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