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Connecticut College
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Good afternoon. My name is Darcie Folsom. I am a resident of Colchester and I am employed full-time by Connecticut College in New London, where I am the director of sexual violence prevention and advocacy.

I am here today to tell you about the work we're doing at Connecticut College, where we have developed a comprehensive approach to sexual assault prevention, as well as response education and training. We call it the Think S.A.F.E. Project. Think S.A.F.E. is Connecticut College's on-campus resource for information about sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking.

Think S.A.F.E.'s mission is to partner with campus members and community agencies to foster individual and collective action to end sexual and relationship violence.

Think S.A.F.E. was launched four years ago with a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women Campus Grant Program. The spirit of the grant was a good fit for our community, and the grant funding enabled Connecticut College to hire and train staff and implement effective programming on our campus. When the grant funding was completed a year ago, the College's senior administrative team agreed this work was so important and so effective that it took on the responsibility for continuing to fund this work – and my position.

I must tell you how important the funding was to Connecticut College being able to begin this important work and build such a comprehensive program. And, when you are considering legislation, I strongly urge you to consider that any mandates must include funding.

Connecticut College's Think S.A.F.E. Project includes:

- 1. Education and training for students, faculty and staff** – We provide training on the topics of dating/domestic violence/sexual assault and stalking to a variety of student, staff and faculty groups, including Campus Safety Officers and our judicial hearing board. This includes training we provide to every incoming student during Orientation.
- 2. A Coordinated Community Response Team** – We bring together representatives from our campus community and from our community partnerships. Community partners include the local sexual assault and domestic violence crisis centers, police departments, state's attorney's office and the victim's advocate from the local court system. The Coordinated Community Response Team members work together to ensure a comprehensive and well-integrated approach to improving access to services.
- 3. A bystander intervention program** – Ours is called Green Dot. It's based on the premise that no one has to do everything, but everyone has to do something. That "something" is your green dot. We train students, faculty and staff to recognize situations in which their peers might be in danger or at

risk. When they see a situation in which someone could be at risk, they are trained to step in and prevent that one potential incident from happening. We just completed a very successful “Green Dot Week” at Connecticut College, a week-long series of awareness events that culminated in a six-hour training session for 52 students. These 6-hour trainings are voluntary on behalf of the students.

- 4. Peer education** – Students at Connecticut College are very involved. Along with the 500 students who have graduated from our Green Dot training program, students are also active in SafetyNet and 1 in 4 peer education groups that raise awareness throughout the year and especially during October and April, domestic violence activism month and sexual assault activism month, respectively.

Students at Connecticut College will tell you that the culture on our campus is very open. People are aware of this issue and they know where to go for help.

Now, you may be surprised to learn that as colleges increase education and awareness of these issues on campuses, the number of reported incidents also tends to go up. As you delve more deeply into this issue, you will understand that an increased number of reported incidents means students are aware of the resources available to them and are getting critical support from their college or university.

I applaud you for taking on this difficult issue. At the same time, I urge you to develop legislation that is fair and equitable and, most importantly, is survivor centered. I enforce this point because I have been hearing a lot lately about “prosecution and conviction.” Some people think that’s the best solution, that it holds people accountable.

But “prosecution and conviction” as a deterrent perpetuates the message that perpetrators should not commit sexual assault because they’ll get in trouble for it – it’s a very self-centered approach that is based on the perpetrator’s well-being and happiness. Sexual assault prevention shouldn’t be about making the perpetrator happy. It should be more about making a community of people who care about each other who are willing to step in and help – and stop it from happening at all.

Connecticut College is a leader in this work and I am happy to answer any questions you have. Thank you.