



**Testimony of Garry Lapidus, Director, Injury Prevention Center
at Connecticut Children's Medical Center
to the Higher Education Committee**

February 11, 2014

Good morning Senator Cassano, Representative Willis, and members of the committee. My name is Garry Lapidus, and I Direct the Injury Prevention Center at Connecticut Children's Medical Center and Hartford Hospital. I am an Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Public Health at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. I am here today to share with you a position statement in support of HB 5029, AAC Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence on Campus. The statement was developed by myself as well as Injury Prevention Center Research Scientists Dr. Susan DiVietro and Dr. Rebecca Beebe.

Intimate partner violence (IPV), is a form of domestic violence. Nationally, it has been reported that 20% of women report physical abuse, sexual abuse, or threats of physical violence by their partner. Although it is often assumed that domestic violence occurs between married couples, this abuse can also take place between all types of intimate partners, including violence among college-aged adults who are presently dating or who have recently been in a dating relationship. This violence may manifest as sexual assault (e.g. "date rape"), as well as physical, emotional, psychological, verbal, or financial abuse.

Given the importance of this issue, the Injury Prevention Center partnered with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) this past fall to conduct a statewide needs assessment of college and university policies and procedures with respect to IPV. The purpose of this assessment is to determine current campus policies and procedures, awareness and prevention activities, and services available for victims of intimate partner violence. So far 20 of the 25 institutions of higher education that were asked to participate have completed the survey. Of those institutions that have completed the survey, almost half agreed that IPV/DV is a problem on their campus. Fourteen out of 20 institutions report that their institution does have an IPV/DV written policy in addition to a sexual assault policy. Additionally, 75% of responding institutions have reported that their institution does not have a formal partnership with their local CCADV member agency, but would be interested in establishing one. We intend to issue a formal report this spring, which will summarize our findings and provide recommendations for a model campus policy on IPV in order to promote safer campus environments.

We ask you to support HB 5029, which establishes critical policies that parallel federal law and will assist college campuses in Connecticut to effectively address IPV. This bill will make certain that the State of Connecticut is in compliance with the 2013 Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which includes acts of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking to a list of major crimes that all U.S. colleges and universities participating in Title IV financial aid programs are required to report. VAWA mandates that these colleges



and universities devise strategies to prevent domestic violence and educate victims regarding their rights and resources.

In Section 3, HB 5029 requires all institutions to establish a trained sexual assault response team. In order to effectively address IPV, this team should be comprised of experts from local domestic violence agencies throughout Connecticut. It is crucial that victims of IPV receive support and care from highly qualified IPV experts on. Currently 17 Connecticut institutions of higher education stated that their staff provides referrals to their local domestic violence agency. Including staff from local domestic violence agencies on sexual assault response teams will help to establish uniformity in the response to intimate partner violence on campuses across the state.

HB 5029 will mandate that all institutions of higher learning report every incident of sexual assault and IPV to state police, local police, campus police or campus security. This includes incidents that occur on campus as well as off campus. The bill will also require institutions of higher learning to provide concise information, written in plain language, detailing the rights of sexual assault and IPV victims, while giving colleges the option of creating an anonymous reporting mechanism for victims. These reporting requirements will provide important data critical to assisting policymakers to comprehensively address this problem.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.