

Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you this day and to express my support for House Bill 5029.

My name is Jennifer Coyne. I am a parent of a current UConn sophomore... The rate of occurrences of sexual assaults at our universities points to the need for continued changes to our legislation and to the need to oversee policies and procedures designed to keep our children safe.

My daughter was victimized during a sexual assault at a UConn affiliated fraternity house this past October. University programs of 'sexual assault awareness training' and seminars on 'harassment' did not serve to dissuade her attacker or encourage on lookers to report nor did these programs encourage administrators at UConn to put forth a coordinated, sensitive and timely response.

My daughter was further victimized by a distinctly ineffective response to her assault by the UConn offices and administration and members of the State Police. I have heard the words 'coordinated and robust response' used by UConn administration to characterize the policies and procedures that were in place last October. Regrettably, my personal experiences in the aftermath of the assault on my daughter have shown me that the *status quo* on our state's university campuses is in dire need of change and woefully misrepresented. I have experienced that what is said and written in defense of victims on campus does not match the actions that are taken in the light of day. The mechanism is broken, denial rules and ineptness and inexperience is in charge.

My experiences were defined by:

- Immediately following her attack- the Universities redirected me between seven distinct offices over the course of two and one-half hours of a phone conversations I searched for the a 'coordinated response' asking specifically who would be assigned as the coordinator of my daughter's care-medical, emotional, academic, and residential. More than a week to gain access to a rape counselor and then she was offered a male counselor. Multiple calls to the office of the university president and the title 9 with none of them returned.
- arguments with confused and un-informed, inexperienced members of campus security as I worked to advocate for my daughter. Specifically, it took two weeks to obtain a temporary parking pass.
- actions by the University taken up only in response to my persistent requests administrators were entry level professionals without experience or "common sense".
- As a FERPA designee information was repeatedly withheld, cooperation with the University Of Connecticut ONLY when I persisted.
- Disciplinary actions culminated with a hearing through the Office of Community Standards. The disciplinary hearing was conducted at my repeated request via a remote video feed. While we were asked to identify ourselves – the participants on the other end were never identified. The following day- again I persisted and after three phone calls The Office of Community Standards cooperated. At the

hearing, the closing comments were from the rapist who was given this forum to question my daughter- we were positively horrified that this was SOP for these hearings and had she known in advance that she would directly confronted by her attacked she would not have participated.

- Repeated comments from the State Police that her attacker was 'really a nice guy' speaks to the pervasive level of apathy towards victims.
- an unexpected encounter with her assailant in a campus dining hall after he was told to stay off campus.
- and struggles to obtain compassionate accommodations within her academic classes, she will be repeating this year.

All this while the UConn is involved in a very public scrutiny on their response to sexual assaults.

House Bill 5029 will stand to effect positive change on our campuses. It will require a greater accountability of the individuals that sit in the offices of our colleges and universities. House bill 5029 will prepare college administrators to aide both the victims and their families of sexual assault. Families have no choice but to look to the universities as partners in the continued growth of our children and as caretakers of their safety. House Bill 5029 is a step along a sensible path to eradicate sexual assault from our educational institutions and improve college policies and procedures for disillusioned administrators by mandating that action be taken by those with the power to do so.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Coyne