



Joint Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement  
Public Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund  
RE: Raised Bill No. 5029: *An Act Concerning Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence on Campus*  
Submitted by: Catherine Bailey, Legal and Public Policy Director  
February 11, 2014

The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls, and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. For 40 years, CWEALF has provided information, referral and support to women seeking guidance about questions involving family law, employment discrimination, education, and civil rights.

Over the years, many individuals seeking assistance from CWEALF's Information & Referral Line express concern regarding Title IX and issues pertaining to sexual assault and violence. It is through this work and experience that we respectfully submit this testimony regarding Raised Bill No. 5029, *An Act Concerning Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence on Campus*.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 provides that "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." 20 U.S.C. § 1681 *et seq.* Sexual harassment and violence can and does interfere with a student's ability to participate in the services and opportunities of a school's programs and activities. For this reason, we applaud the Committee's willingness to address sexual assault on campuses in Connecticut and ensure the system is well-designed to meet the needs of victims, as well as require appropriate responses and reporting by schools.

Raised Bill No. 5029 proposes a number of steps to improve the process, including providing the option for anonymous complaints; applying policies to sexual assault and intimate partner violence occurring in any location, to school employees, and for those who disclose rather than report; mandating prevention and awareness programs; and requiring the creation of sexual assault response teams (SART) at institutions of higher education. Sexual assault response teams are a critical way to institutionalize the coordination of appropriate prevention and response.

The well-being and safety of students in educational settings is of paramount importance, and CWEALF supports measures to ensure students' meaningful participation in school programs and benefits, by maintaining an environment free from harassment or violence. Thank you for your consideration of this issue and allowing us the opportunity to submit testimony.