



Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services
SB 389, AAC Court Operations

Jillian Gilchrest, Director of Public Policy and Communications
Judiciary Committee, March 10, 2014

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Jillian Gilchrest and I am the Director of Public Policy & Communication for Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). CONNSACS is the coalition of Connecticut's nine community-based sexual assault crisis services programs. Our mission is to end sexual violence and ensure high quality, comprehensive and culturally-competent sexual assault victim services.

During our last fiscal year, certified sexual assault victim advocates provided hospital, police and court accompaniment, support groups, individual counseling, 24/7 hotline support, information and referrals to over 7,000 victims and survivors of sexual violence throughout the state..

CONNSACS opposes the proposed change to subsection (b) of section 46b-15 in SB 389.

Currently, when a victim of sexual assault is assaulted by a family or household member, they are eligible for a civil restraining order under section 46b-15 of the Connecticut statutes. When said victim of sexual assault applies for a restraining order under 46b-15, the application guarantees that a hearing will be scheduled based on the application within 14 days, at which time both the applicant and respondent are given the opportunity to appear.

Under the proposed change, if a victim's application and affidavit does not meet the eligibility requirements, as outlined in current statute, then that victim may be denied a hearing. This is problematic, and may limit a victim's access to a civil restraining order based solely on the application they file. According to Connecticut Legal Services, Inc., more than 80% of family cases in Connecticut are pro-se, meaning that the individual represents themselves.

If a victim of sexual assault does not fill out the application in such a way to meet the requirements of 46b-15, but would otherwise be able to articulate how their situation does meet the requirements, this proposal will deny them that opportunity and the opportunity to obtain a civil restraining order and the safety they seek and deserve.

CONNSACS opposes this unnecessary change to subsection (b) of section 46b-15 in SB 389 that could have dangerous and long-term consequences for victims of both sexual assault and domestic violence.