

Nicole Seymour
151 Salmon Brook Dr
Glastonbury, CT 06033

**Testimony of Nicole Seymour, CONNSACS intern and YWCA volunteer
In Support of SB 204 AN ACT CONCERNING BEST PRACTICES FOR PROTECTING
SENIOR CITIZENS FROM INTERACTION WITH SEXUAL OFFENDERS**

To Co-Chairs Senator Flexer, Representative Serra, Vice-Chairs Senator Osten, Representative Rovero, and Ranking Members Senator Kelly, and Representative Bolinsky and members of the Aging Committee. My name is Nikki Seymour and I am a Master's in Social Work intern at the Connecticut Sexual Assault and Crisis Services. I am also a volunteer sexual assault and crisis counselor for the YWCA New Britain. CONNSACS is the statewide association of Connecticut's nine community-based rape crisis centers. I support raised bill No. 204 AN ACT CONCERNING BEST PRACTICES FOR PROTECTING SENIOR CITIZENS FROM INTERACTION WITH SEXUAL OFFENDERS.

Sexual violence affects all communities including the elderly. Yet addressing sexual abuse within the older population is difficult as it is often a hidden problem. Despite increases in mandated reporting laws and efforts by protection services, cases of abuse, neglect, and neglect are undetected. One study found that only one in fourteen cases of elder abuse is reported to authorities¹. Issues of caregiver, family, or patient abuse create additional barriers for individuals to be able to report. The scant research on elder abuse found that 90% of victims are abused by a family member². Adults with a physical or cognitive disability have higher rates of victimization than those without disabilities. Trauma, especially in later in life, places the victim's health, safety, and well-being in jeopardy³.

Signs of elder sexual abuse may be hidden if health care professionals, community members, and employees are not trained in detection and disclosure. This legislation has the ability to employ best practices in protecting senior citizens. This must include skilled nursing facilities, rest homes, assisted living facilities, congregate housing, adult day centers, and senior centers.

However, zoning may not be the best practice to prevent and address sexual violence in the community among senior citizens. A model program already exists in the state and should be strengthened to better serve those convicted of sexual offense. Under CONNSACS' leadership the Sex Offender Supervisory Unit is a collaboration between victim advocates, probation, parole, and sex offender treatment providers. Supervising offenders in this way ensures a community response that can respond to the needs of offenders and victims.

The dynamics of sexual abuse and the sex offender registry must be considered in this legislation. To protect senior citizens, a victim-centered approach must be taken to address sexual abuse awareness and prevention. Education needs to include the dynamics of trauma, how to access services, and how to provide a trauma-informed response. The registry is only a

¹ National Research Council. (2003) Elder mistreatment: Abuse, neglect and exploitation in an aging America. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press

² National Center on Elder Abuse, Westat, Inc. (1998). The national elder abuse incidence study: Final report. Washington D.C.: Authors.

³ [http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/Library/Data/Abuse of Those with Disabilities](http://www.ncea.aoa.gov/Library/Data/Abuse%20of%20Those%20with%20Disabilities)

fraction of sex offenders in the state and the approach to protect senior citizens should prioritize education and awareness first.

I hope the Committee sees the importance of taking steps to provide additional supports in Connecticut for senior citizens. Supporting SB 204 and increasing education and training to serve senior citizens is an important step to prevent sexual violence.