

Testimony of Jennifer Wenderoth
Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Milford
In Support of SB 636, An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Public Hearing February 26,2015

Senator Flexer, Representative Haddad and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, my name is Jennifer Wenderoth and I am the College Advocate for the Rape Crisis Center of Milford, and I am writing in support of SB 636, An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent.

As a College Advocate I work mostly with college students who are victims of sexual assault. The majority of these victims never see justice due to the fact that, when they come forward, their case ends up not being adequately punished, and their assailant is not held accountable.

Why is this? Believe it or not, it is because the victim does not say “no”.

The sad truth is that most victims of college sexual assault do not say “no”, but they also do not say “yes” either. Sometimes they are too afraid to even say anything during the assault. This lack of vocalization compromises a victim’s argument in the existing university disciplinary system by making it seem as if their silence was in fact consent. Unfortunately, the disciplinary board rarely questions a perpetrator as to whether they obtained consent; instead, they ask if the victim resisted.

What college students need to understand is that the lack of a “no” is not a “yes”. Sexual partners must in fact get a yes at every stage of activity and every single time. When I talk to college students about getting affirmative consent, consistently there are a number of students who argue that they actually do not need it- that they just know the other person wants to sexually engage. Adopting affirmative consent as the standard would help to teach all students, and faculty, that nonconsensual sex is sexual assault.

There is a massive problem on college campuses today with sexual violence, and we need to address this. Putting affirmative consent in university policies would be a step in the right direction. We need students to know that they will be held responsible unless they get consent. We need to stop letting perpetrators get away with sexual assault and start putting victims first.

I hope you will join me in supporting SB 636, An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent.

Thank you,
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