

Testimony of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. (CONNSACS)
Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee
Laura Cordes, Executive Director
April 23, 2015

Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger, and members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee, my name is Laura Cordes and I am the Executive Director of 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.

The Governor's proposed budget decreased the rape crisis line item by over 1/3 in the Department of Health budget for FY15. This cut will be a dramatic step backwards in addressing sexual assault, a crime experienced by nearly 20% of Connecticut residents. Sexual assault counseling, advocacy, and support provided by CONNSACS's member centers is vital in addressing the needs of victims and helping them through a difficult healing process.

For Connecticut to continue to prevent sexual violence and improve the response to sexual assault victims, this funding must be restored. We understand and respect the current fiscal reality and budget constraints that the state faces, and we are very thankful for every dollar of funding that we receive. However, the answer should not be to reduce funding to vital programs that benefit children and families (\$319 of the \$500 million proposed cuts). The state of Connecticut must invest in creating a more equitable taxation system by changing the revenue structure to address the current budget deficit.

The Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee must consider several revenue-generating policies that would greatly increase the state's economy. Raising a cigarette tax by \$.95 a pack would bring in an annual \$60 million each year. Introducing a sugar-sweetened beverage and candy tax of just one cent per ounce would bring in \$179 million. Finally, adjusting the tax rate among the state's highest income earners would leverage an estimated \$300 million in revenue. Connecticut's marginal rate of 6.7% is much lower than New York (8.82%) and New Jersey (8.97%)¹.

Changes must be made to Connecticut's revenue structures, not the reduction of vital programs that maintain the health and well-being of residents. Connecticut can avoid the damaging cuts from programs and services that benefit all of Connecticut by adopting a more robust revenue-generating system.

Thank you,
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¹ <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/bud15revenueoptionssum.pdf>