

-YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

February 26, 2015

Testimony of Hedy Gutfreund
Communications Director,
Yale College Democrats

206 Elm. St., A21
New Haven, CT 06511

In favor: S.B. No. 636
An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent

My name is Hedy Gutfreund, and I am the Communications Director of the Yale College Democrats and a freshman at Yale University. I am writing to you to urge you to pass the affirmative consent bill. As a female student, I am particularly grateful for Yale's policy of affirmative consent. While the sexual climate is far from perfect here, affirmative consent is key to making it a positive climate.

Although I am only a freshman, I firmly believe that affirmative consent changes the dynamic, culture, and conversation about issues of sexual violence and sexual pressure. The conversation began my first week of Yale during orientation when every freshman participated in "The Myth of Miscommunication" workshop led by Communication and Consent Educators. The workshop addressed many of the concerns people have with the policy of affirmative consent. As humans, we learned, we pick up on the subtleties in communication. Thus, affirmative consent does not require sexual encounters to be rigid and stilted in order to have consent.

I've continued to spend a lot of time thinking about affirmative consent throughout my time at Yale so far. I participated in the "It's on Us, Yale" campaign that encouraged student groups to discuss how to make Yale a safe place by articulating what our vision of Yale is. On a visit to a friend at Columbia, I felt the presence of the "Carry that Weight" campaign and the lasting mark that sexual violence can leave on a community and the importance of taking action to create safe sexual climates.

More recently, the Yale College Democrats hosted a panel with Senator Mae Flexer, Yale's Director of the Office of Gender and Campus Culture Melanie Boyd, and a student Communication and Consent Educator. It helped me articulate why affirmative consent is so articulate: the absence of no is not a yes. If we live in a culture where the absence of no suffices as a yes, we live in a culture that lacks respect and safety. In order to create safe campuses, affirmative consent is key. I urge you to pass this legislation.