

-YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

February 26, 2015

Testimony of Jackson Beck
Legislative Coordinator, Yale College Democrats
In favor: S.B. No. 636
An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent

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My name is Jackson Beck, and I strongly urge the committee to support Senate Bill 636 on behalf of the Yale College Democrats.

As an undergraduate at Yale, one of only two colleges in Connecticut that has adopted affirmative consent policies, I've had the opportunity to see why this legislation is so important. Affirmative consent policies recognize that making the "use of force" or "threat of force" central to definitions for sexual assault sets the bar dangerously low for sexual encounters. Adopting "yes means yes" as the standard for evaluation contributes to a campus environment that emphasizes positive, healthy relationships.

At the same time, adopting such a policy doesn't mean making people drastically change their behavior. This legislation simply underlines the importance of communication in sexual encounters, and it recognizes that there are many ways an individual can express resistance to engaging in sexual activity. The absence of a "no" by itself certainly doesn't serve as an invitation to proceed in a sexual encounter, and people already know this because humans are great communicators. At an early age, we develop a strong ability to understand one another through body language. People send signals in numerous ways, and these signals are easy to read.

Rather than demanding that individuals engage in stilted sexual encounters, S.B. 636 makes us acknowledge the clear signals we send to one another when we communicate. It promotes a safer, happier campus environment where sexual relationships are grounded in enthusiasm rather than ambivalence or reluctance. Affirmative consent policies make Yale a better place, and extending these policies to other college campuses would make Connecticut a better state, so I sincerely hope the committee supports this bill.