

# -YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

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

Many of you are probably wondering what good affirmative consent policies can do on college campuses. You're probably thinking of lots of the counterarguments you've heard-- "what an ambiguous definition," or, "what a hard thing to prove," or, "but colleges already have sexual assault policies! Why do we need an affirmative consent clause?"

I am a freshman at Yale, where we have an affirmative consent policy. Because of this policy, students at Yale are immersed in a culture of consent from the time we step foot into our required Communication and Consent workshop. But let's imagine for a minute that Yale didn't have such a policy. Let's imagine that I came into college just as I came out of high school, where I was told that the only way to stop sexual assault was dressing modestly, carrying pepper spray, and, for good measure, loudly saying "no."

Luckily, I have never been sexually assaulted. But if I had been assaulted, on a campus without an affirmative consent policy, I would likely have never told anybody. Why? Because my mindset would have been the same as it was in high school: "I didn't say "no" when he came at me. I was wearing tight jeans or a low-cut top. I was at a party. I was dancing. I must have been asking for it."

What a terrible culture to perpetuate on a college campus. College freshmen are just kids. Most of us are barely 18. What you teach us about sexual culture on the brink of our first foray into the adult world will stick with us. So don't teach us that we must hear "no" to stop a sexual act that our partner may or may not be okay with. Rather, teach us to read body signals. Teach us to remain constantly aware of whether our partner is okay with what is happening. Teach us to be respectful and responsible of our partner.

This is what requiring an affirmative consent policy on college campuses will do. Because Yale has an affirmative consent policy, I heard from my first week on campus that consent-- verbal or nonverbal -- is vital when engaging in sexual activities. I heard that, even if I don't forcefully say "no," even if I am wearing tight jeans or a low-cut top, if I or my partner pulls away and or otherwise shows that they don't want to continue, any sexual activity should stop. And everyone else in my freshman class heard this as well. The language of affirmative

consent - “positive, unambiguous, and voluntary” - was our introduction into the sexual culture of Yale’s campus.

So why should all of Connecticut’s college campuses be required to have an affirmative consent policy? To promote exactly this culture. To promote a culture of being aware of your partner, of being aware of your surroundings, and being aware of when, out of respect for your partner, you stop. Begin shaping this type of sexual culture in college, when students are still developing ideas and beliefs about the world around them, and, as we graduate and age, it will begin to shape the sexual culture of our communities outside of college campuses as well. And, as events on college campuses and in communities all around the country continue to make clear, the sexual culture of our communities desperately needs to change.