

Testimony of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England
Higher Education Committee of the CT General Assembly
on Senate Bill 636,

AN ACT CONCERNING AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT

Representative Willis, Senator Bartolomeo and members of the Higher Education Committee, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England is the largest provider of family planning and reproductive health care in Connecticut. Over 65,000 patients, both women and men, but overwhelmingly women between ages 19 and 25, seek our services each year. Our mission commits us to providing the access and information that both women and men need to make positive reproductive health decisions. Unfortunately, during the course of a reproductive health examination, our health center staff sometimes become aware of a patient's experience with intimate partner violence, acquaintance rape or another act of sexual assault or misconduct. We are keenly aware that colleges and universities have been in the spotlight recently, with regard to these behaviors, and for the following reasons, we support Bill 636.

- Institutions of higher education that include affirmative consent in their sexual assault policies may be seen as creating a campus environment that is overall more positive, more supportive of victims and likely to experience less sexual violence;
- In these situations, it is vital that institutional investigations refocus from the victim's behavior, and whether (s)he fought hard enough or resisted by "saying no" ...onto the perpetrator's behavior;
- Any legislation that addresses affirmative consent should require an educational component for students, staff and faculty, which should be easily incorporated into existing sexual assault awareness training; and
- Education and awareness about affirmative consent should be tied to a broader conversation with all campus audiences, about healthy sexuality and safe sexual behaviors.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Bill 636, An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent.