

**Nicole Seymour  
151 Salmon Brook Dr  
Glastonbury, CT 06033**

**Testimony of Nicole Seymour, CONNSACS intern and YWCA volunteer  
In Support of SB966 AN ACT CONCERNING SEXUAL ASSAULT FORENSIC  
EXAMINERS AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
March 12, 2015**

To Co-Chairs Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis, and esteemed members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Nicole Seymour and I am an Master's in Social Work candidate at the University of Connecticut and interning at Connecticut Sexual Assault and Crisis Services, the state's leading voice to end sexual violence. I also work directly with victims in crisis as a volunteer sexual assault crisis counselor with the YWCA. This act, SB966 *An Act Concerning Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners At Institutions of Higher Education*, would benefit the state by expanding coverage of sexual assault forensic examiners (SAFE) or sexual assault nurse examiners (SANE).

Victims go through the forensic exam for several reasons. One being they need medical treatment and medication. The exam kit is also completed in order to provide biological and DNA samples to be used in legal proceedings against the assailant. The 13-step, time consuming exam is conducted by the SAFE/SANE to collect and document the evidence such as hair samples, genital swabs, and fingernail scraping. This process may occur up to 120 hours after the assault and the SAFE/SANE practitioner may be the first person touching the victim. Victims have gone through emotional and physical trauma before coming to the hospital for the forensic exam.

To provide the most victim-centered care, SAFE/SANE practitioners should be utilized for the completion of the forensic examination kits. SAFE/SANE practitioners have undergone advanced training on sexual assault and how to give an compassionate, safe exams. The extra training as well as the continued work specifically on sexual assault victims allows SAFE practitioners to decrease the likelihood of re-victimization of victims receiving medical treatment.

The SAFE/SANE program uses a pool of practitioners who are on call and respond to the hospital needing an examination. SAFE/SANEs respond within 30-60 minutes of being paged. SAFEs are also trained in collaborating with sexual assault victim advocates. Together the advocates and SAFE/SANEs can provide resources to victims prior to discharge. Interacting with victims early and giving support to him/her increases the likelihood of victims staying involved in the legal process of their case. Additionally, examinations done correctly and quickly reduces any secondary health effects of collecting the evidence.

Given the proportion of college students sexually assaulted, the need to expand the SAFE/SANE program to cover a health care facility operated by an institution of higher education is extremely important. Students deserve the same opportunity for safe and compassionate care without needing to travel far to access services. The program should be extended to more locations in order to address this gap in services.

The Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee must enact SB966 to provide victims with more supports by expanding the SAFE practitioners to provide care for victims in health care facilities of higher education institutions. Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions or comments.