



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Testimony opposing

SB 378, AAC the Recommendations of the High School Graduation Requirements Task Force

Education Committee
March 7, 2016

Member Organizations

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services

Ansonia, CT

The Center for Family Justice

Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center

Danbury, CT

Domestic Violence Program United Services

Dayville, CT

Network Against Domestic Abuse

Enfield, CT

Domestic Abuse Services

Greenwich YWCA

Greenwich, CT

Interval House

Hartford, CT

Chrysalis Domestic Violence Services

Meriden, CT

New Horizons

Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center

New Britain, CT

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services

New Haven, CT

Safe Futures

New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center

Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services

Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center

Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project

Torrington, CT

Safe Haven

Waterbury, CT

Domestic Violence Program United Services

Willimantic, CT

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and our 18 member organizations that serve them. Our members provide essential services to over 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy. CCADV is a member of Healthy Youth, a statewide campaign seeking to create a more comprehensive approach to health education in Connecticut schools.

We oppose the elimination of the half credit requirement for health and safety education in high school. Existing graduation requirements call for "three and one half credits in career and life skills, including not fewer than 1 credit in physical education, one half credit in health and safety education and two credits in career and life skills." Under this bill, all that will remain is the 1 credit requirement for physical education.

Connecticut continues to struggle with addressing the prevention and intervention of teen dating violence within our schools. This includes student education in grades K-12 regarding healthy relationships and boundary setting to prevent abusive relationships later in life. This bill proposes removing the requirement that any such education occur at the high school level.

According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey¹:

- 26% of CT high school students report being verbally or emotionally abused (33.9% female; 19.1% male)
- 9% of CT high school students report being physically hurt on purpose by a dating partner (10.1% female; 7.9% male)
- 11% of CT high school students report being forced by someone they were dating or "going out with" to do sexual things when they did not want to (15.5% female; 7.3% male)

It is crucial that we better prepare schools to prevent and respond to cases of domestic violence and teen dating violence experienced by students.

We strongly urge this committee not only to maintain the required health and safety education, but to also include language calling on the State Department of Education work in conjunction with domestic violence advocates to develop a statewide dating violence awareness and prevention program for use by local and regional boards of education. Such program should include:

- (1) For teachers, evidence-based instructional modules that may include, but not be limited to, (A) training regarding the prevention and identification of, and response to, dating violence, and (B) resources to further student, teacher and parental awareness and prevention of dating violence;
- (2) For students, age appropriate, evidence-based educational materials designed for children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, regarding dating violence awareness and prevention that may include, but not be limited to, (A)

the skills to (i) recognize dating violence, (ii) recognize controlling behaviors in the context of intimate relationships, (iii) identify and develop healthy relationship boundaries, and (B) strategies to (i) promote disclosure, (ii) reduce self-blame and increase self-worth, and (iii) mobilize bystanders; and,

(3) A uniform dating violence response policy and reporting procedure that may include, but not be limited to, (A) a statement that dating violence will not be tolerated within the local or regional school district, (B) actions that victims of dating violence may take to obtain assistance from the local or regional school district, (C) intervention and counseling options for victims of dating violence, (D) procedures for parental notification and involvement in the response to incidents of teen dating violence, and (E) uniform reporting procedures for incidents of dating violence.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

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¹ The 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was completed by 2,405 students in 46 public high schools in Connecticut during the spring of 2013. The school response rate was 85%, the student response rate was 78%, and the overall response rate was 67%. The results are representative of all students in grades 9-12. The complete report can be found at http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hisr/pdf/cshs_ycb2013_report.pdf