

Catherine D. Ludlum
46 St. James Street, Unit 16
Manchester, CT 06040-5982

860-649-7110
cathyludlum@cox.net

HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
Testimony Opposing HB 5376
An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent
March 1, 2016

Senator Bartolomeo, Rep. Willis, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Cathy Ludlum, and I am writing in opposition to HB 50376.

While I understand that young people on college campuses are being sexually exploited, and share your desire to find a solution, An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent is not that solution. Further, I believe that this legislation will make the problem worse, not better.

As a woman in my 50s, I have been able to observe social trends as they have developed over the decades. Certainly, pressure on college students to become sexually active is not something new. I would suggest, however, that two things have changed dramatically since I graduated from college in 1984.

First, there was more of a sense that sexual intimacy should be part of a committed relationship. Of course, there was the urge for instant gratification, but it was balanced by an understanding that it may not always be in one's best interest to eat dessert first. While students may not have wanted to talk about non-glamorous topics like sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancies, or simply the need to focus on getting an education, these things were in people's minds; and they did have some influence on our actions.

I frequently talk about current events with my employees, many of whom are young women. One of them told me recently that sex is the new currency: "I'll fix your car if you give me sex." If a woman feels that sex is the only way she can get the assistance, protection, or companionship she needs, she will say "Yes," even if her enthusiasm is not real. Another said that in our work-full-time-go-to-school-full-time culture, people are too busy for relationships. Hooking up is easier. This bill will not change these dynamics.

Second, I have watched with distress as our connections to one another have deteriorated. What began as a movement toward self-determination (a good thing), has now evolved into self-centeredness. Already people are reluctant to get involved, or even to reach out to help in a crisis. I would think that HB 5376 will make this worse.

Notice that "sexual activity" is not defined in the bill. Unless it is clear that the intention is solely to stop intimate violations, sanctions will be applied to gestures such as a hug or a peck on the cheek. This has already happened in other states. Do we want people to become afraid of giving innocent (nonsexual) touches? Without touch, babies die and adults wither.

Yes Means Yes is an artificial standard that promotes hooking up. Instead, let's encourage students – and everyone else – to treat one another with respect, courtesy, and fidelity.