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Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis, and members of the committee,

My name is Gretchen Marino and I am student at Central Connecticut State University. I am an intern at Planned Parenthood and the Violence against Women program Coordinator at Central Connecticut State University's Ruthe Boyea Women's Center. **I am submitting written testimony in support of HB 5376: An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent.** Affirmative Consent is the active, ongoing, positive, conscious, and voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity.

As the Coordinator of Violence against Women programs at the Central Connecticut State University's Ruthe Boyea Women's Center, I advocate for survivors of sexual violence and domestic violence through two annual events, "The Walk of No Shame" and "Take Back the Night." Both events have a "Speak Out" portion, where survivors of sexual violence and domestic violence share their stories and receive support from the CCSU community. During the Speak Out, many students find support and solidarity with other survivors who tell their stories because their stories sound so similar to each other. "I was too drunk to agree to that" or "I never said yes" are often repeated during the Speak Out from survivors who tell their stories. Affirmative Consent would prevent those sexual assaults from ever happening.

Central Connecticut State University does not have an affirmative consent policy, but other schools close to us do. Albertus Magnus College, Yale University, and Wesleyan University all have Affirmative Consent policies on their campuses that have helped make it very clear what consent is what it is not. Albertus Magnus College's consent policy states "the absence of 'no' does not imply consent." Affirmative Consent is a "yes means yes" policy, not a "no means no" policy. This bill would take the blame and questioning off of victims of sexual violence and would question the alleged perpetrator of sexual violence, asking if they were given consent.

This bill would require continuous education of what consent is and will help create an environment where survivors feel comfortable reporting incidents and openly telling their stories. On college campuses, many students participate in parties and drinking. When drinking is involved, individuals can not willing consent to sexual activity. This bill would not only protect and support survivors of sexual violence that were intoxicated at the time, but with educate students about the fact that no one can willing consent to sex while intoxicated.

An affirmative consent policy on all college campuses is something that would really benefit college students and communities, by providing students will better knowledge about how to give and receive consent and will help survivors feel more supported and open to tell their stories and report sexual assaults.

Thank you,  
Gretchen Marino