

# -YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

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350 College Street, FB22  
New Haven, CT 06511

In favor: H.B. 5376  
An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent

When I arrived on campus last August, there was nothing ambiguous about my school's approach to affirmative consent. There were no blurred lines. It was simply: "Yes means yes." I sat among 1,300 of my peers, listened to those words, and was profoundly comforted by the message Yale--my new home--was communicating.

I was lucky in a way thousands of other students were not. My fellow students across the state didn't receive this strong gesture of support from their new schools because only three universities in Connecticut--UConn, Trinity, and Yale--have instituted affirmative consent as official university policy.

Through the "Myth of Miscommunication" workshop required of all freshmen, I learned very quickly what sort of campus sexual culture was encouraged and allowed. Guided by Yale's upperclassmen Community and Consent Educators, freshmen began the year learning how to foster a positive sexual climate on campus--and we succeeded, because this was the expectation. There were no buts. There were no exceptions. And if students came in unsure of what affirmative consent was, how it worked, if it worked, their concerns and questions were met with patience and clarity.

That's what I aim to do today, in writing this testimony. Misconceptions abound on an issue like affirmative consent: an issue which is often considered the realm of the ambiguous, the iffy, the gray. A few key facts to note:

The area I'd like to clarify in my address to you today: **miscommunication**. I'll admit, going into college, I was not sure about how an affirmative consent policy could be clear enough when it actually came down to it. Perhaps just not refusing was enough. Freshman year realization #1: it's not. As the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Melanie Boyd, informed an entire class of somewhat squirming eighteen-year-olds, affirmative consent at Yale means *enthusiastic* agreement. Beyond the immediate giggles, there was a realization. Affirmative consent is not the absence of a "no." Affirmative consent is a "yes." The myth of miscommunication is just that: a myth. There is no room for ambiguity in affirmative consent policy, when the expectation is for explicit agreement.

I say "yes" to affirmative consent. And I hope you do as well.