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Submitted to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
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Good morning Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

House Bill No. 5376, An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent

Although Connecticut has made tremendous progress to address sexual violence on college campuses across the state, more needs to be done to ensure that students who report an alleged sexual assault to the academic institution are not further victimized by the deficient policies of that institution. House Bill No. 5376 will promote the fair and just treatment of students consistently throughout the state.

The issue of “consent” in sexual assault matters is not new to the legislature, policy makers, law enforcement, sexual assault service providers, and certainly, victims of sexual assault. An alleged perpetrator of sexual assault needs only to offer “consent” as his/her defense and the dynamics of an investigation shift from the actions of the perpetrator to the actions of the victim. Establishing an affirmative consent threshold will balance the investigative field in sexual assault cases, even if only on the campuses of our institutions of higher education.

While many of the Connecticut state universities have a strong consent policy, adoption of an affirmative consent policy for all institutions of higher education will ensure a statewide uniform standard and offer equal protection for all Connecticut students.

House Bill No. 5376 will move sexual assault investigations on college campuses away from the “no means no” hurdle to the “yes means yes” standard of accountability. I strongly urge the Committee’s favorable report.