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Dear members of the committee,

My name is Ruth Assefa, and I am a second year master's student at the Yale School of Public Health, and I also attended Yale College as an undergraduate (Class of 2015). I am writing to support the proposed House Bill 5376 An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent.

Affirmative consent policies are about creating a healthy culture on college campuses; a culture that ensures that all students have the tools to engage in discussions about consent, that allows victims to feel safe in reporting abuses, and that holds everyone—administrators, faculty, students and staff—accountable for ensuring all students feel safe and respected at all times.

Serving as a mentor and an advisor to freshmen students my junior and senior years at Yale through the Afro-American Cultural Center, the sexual climate at Yale was a topic I frequently discussed with my students. It was reassuring to me that my students received education about affirmative consent when they first matriculated, and that I could support this education with conversations about what safe and respectful sexual encounters look like. Activities like the frozen yogurt skits used to teach affirmative consent gave us an easy entry point to really delve into deep conversations about bystander intervention and ensuring active, voluntary consent. It was also very comforting knowing that there were organizations like the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Education (SHARE) on campus that I could refer students to should they have more questions or concerns.

An overwhelming number of students come to college not having thoroughly engaged with the issue of consent, and it is my belief that the university is responsible for ensuring that students have the necessary education and tools to practice safe, healthy and consensual sexual activity.

I urge you to please support this bill, and make college campuses a safe and more conscious space for all students.

Sincerely,
Ruth Assefa