



SAFE HAVEN
OF GREATER WATERBURY, INC.

In Support of HB5605 AN ACT CONCERNING TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

Judiciary Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Hello Committee Members,

My name is Heather Francisco; I am an advocate at Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury. Safe Haven is a member center working under the guidance of the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formally CONNSACS). Our sexual assault crisis center provides free and confidential services to victims and survivors of sexual violence in Beacon Falls, Bethlehem, Middlebury, Naugatuck, Oxford, Prospect, Southbury, Thomaston, Waterbury, Watertown, Wolcott, and Woodbury. I am writing you today to ask for your continued support of HB 5605 An Act Concerning the Termination of Parental Rights.

Under current law in Connecticut the standard Judges are required to use for termination of parental rights is a conviction. This differs from all other termination petitions in the state which require only clear and convincing evidence. If a rapist is not convicted his victim could then be forced to maintain a relationship with the person who violated her in one of the most intimate and personal ways. This is troubling when one considers the fact that rape is the most under-prosecuted crime in America with an estimated 2% of sexual assaults resulting in a conviction. The current law holds rape survivors at a higher standard than other woman seeking to restrict custody rights on the grounds of abuse, neglect, abandonment and even killing of a child. Connecticut is a forward thinking state and I am saddened to know that a conviction would not be required to terminate the parental rights of a parent who killed their child, but would for a parent whose child was a product of a sexual assault. Rape results in pregnancy for between 25,000 and 32,000 women annually in our country and we have an opportunity to make sure that in Connecticut when this occurs we are not holding survivors of sexual assault to an unfairly higher standard of proof.

Thank you in advance for your time, effort, and consideration.

Heather Francisco, MSHSV
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