



February 16, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Kane, Representative Ziobran and members of the Appropriations Committee:

Women and Families Center (WFC) is one of nine community based member programs of the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formerly CONNSACS). WFC provides comprehensive, culturally appropriate support services to survivors of sexual violence in Meriden, Wallingford, Cheshire, Middlesex County and the ten towns of Greater New Haven. Rape crisis services are the only programs in our state that specialize in the counseling and advocacy needs of sexual assault survivors.

WFC staff provides 24/7 support through hotlines to survivors in both English and Spanish, one on one counseling and systems' advocacy including hospital accompaniment at no cost to survivors. Last year, WFC provided services to over 1000 survivors, almost a 25% increase over fiscal year 2014. Since 2015, WFC has been asked to participate in 6 Sexual Assault Resource Teams (SART) on college campuses. Additionally, 12 presentations for students and faculty have been facilitated.

Funding for the rape crisis services in the Department of Public Health budget is essential for community based sexual assault programs to continue to provide crisis intervention and advocacy services to thousands of child, adolescent and adult victims of sexual violence.

WFC opposes the governor's proposal for a 5.75 cut and the consolidation of funding for sexual assault victims into a general fund. It is unclear how the 5.75 cut will be allocated and therefore, total elimination of our funding is a real possibility. It would be important to note that a cut of any level is contrary to our state's commitment to address sexual violence. With so much attention being drawn to campus sexual violence, sexual assault in the military and in the prison system and the new federal and state laws encouraging survivors to step forward, now is not the time to cut direct support to the survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones who require our assistance and support to seek care and justice.

Please oppose the Governor's proposed budget and restore the rape crisis line item at full funding.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Carissa Conway  
Director, Prevention & Intervention Services

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Women and Families Center  
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