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Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
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Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations 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. 5044, *An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June, 30, 2017*

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) understands the fiscal challenges that the State of Connecticut is facing and that difficult decisions need to be made to address these challenges. These challenges extend beyond the funding of state agencies and impact the funding provided to many non-profit organizations that provide critical services to the residents of Connecticut—particularly to the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (the Alliance), formally the Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS).

The Department of Public Health provides Rape Crisis funding which supports the Alliance's nine community based sexual assault crisis services programs. Those services, which have been provided for more than 30 years, include a statewide 24 hour hotline, hospital and court accompaniments, support groups and crisis counseling for survivors of sexual violence. Such programs are the only programs in Connecticut that specialize in both the counseling and advocacy needs of sexual assault survivors and their family.

House Bill No. 5044, specifically the Department of Public Health budget recommendations concerning the Rape Crisis funding (T368), proposes to eliminate the line item budget for Rape Crisis and allow the Department of Public Health to determine the funding. Connecticut has been a consistent partner and strong supporter of funding the Alliance and its member programs. The Alliance must maintain this consistent funding and support to ensure that the services currently available to victims and survivors of sexual violence will continue to be available. The OVA strongly recommends that the Rape Crisis funding continue as a line item in the Department of Public Health's budget.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony.