



**The Center for  
Family Justice**

**Testimony Regarding  
Appropriations Committee Meeting  
February 18, 2016  
Governor's Budget Proposal**

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Senator Bye and Representative Walker,

I am writing on behalf of The Center for Family Justice which is a sexual assault crisis agency, domestic violence crisis agency, and accredited child advocacy center. The Center serves the towns of Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull and is one of nine community based programs of the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formally ConnSACS).

As a sexual assault victim advocacy program we adamantly oppose the Governor's proposed budget as it would decrease funding for vital services in our state. Funding for rape crisis programs in the Department of Public Health budget is essential for advocacy programs to provide crisis intervention and advocacy services to both children and adult survivors of sexual assault. Connecticut has made tremendous progress in regards to sexual assault awareness, addressing sexual assault on college campuses, and prevention measures. A cut in budget would directly affect the community based sexual assault advocacy programs' abilities to provide direct services to survivors as well as statutorily required prevention to children and college aged students.

The Center for Family Justice provides free and confidential services to survivors of sexual assault including hospital accompaniment, advocacy, counseling, information and referrals to other agencies including the Office of Victim Services, and legal/criminal justice advocacy. Sexual assault advocates work with primary victims as well as their families. Children who have been victims of sexual abuse benefit from advocacy services and their parents do as well. Supporting a parent of a sexually abused child is critical for the healing of the entire family. Our agency provides culturally competent services for survivors of all ages through the 24 hour hotline, walk in hours, support groups, and individual sessions with advocates.

The Center also provides prevention education to college campuses and K-12 students. The primary prevention programs are critical to promote healthy environments and behaviors for Connecticut's youth to reduce the likelihood or frequency of sexual violence occurring. The Center's prevention/community educators also provide trainings and education to professionals such as law enforcement, health care providers, campus

*Strengthening families, preventing abuse*

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staff, and other community members who maybe providing services to sexual assault survivors.

While it is difficult under the proposed budget to speak to an unknown specific cut, *any* monetary cut to sexual assault services would impact service delivery throughout the state.

I thank you for your time and consideration on this matter and urge the committee to oppose the Governor's proposed budget and restore the rape crisis line item at full funding. My contact information is listed below and am available for any questions or to expand on the specific services that this funding allows sexual assault crisis agencies to provide.

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