



Testimony Regarding

HB 5044, AA Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017

Department of Public Health Budget

Appropriations Committee February 18, 2016

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Kane and Representative Ziobran.

Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury, Inc. provided life-saving services to over 800 men, women and children in calendar year 2015 who were victims and survivors of sexual violence. Service provided include: 24-hour crisis intervention, individual and peer group counseling, advocacy and accompaniment for medical and legal issues. We also provided presentations to over 2,754 adults and 14,464 students (ages 5-21) through our community education program in an effort to prevent this type of violence. Our sexual assault services program serves victims and their families in the towns of Beacon Falls, Bethlehem, Middlebury, Naugatuck, Oxford, Prospect, Southbury, Thomaston, Waterbury, Watertown, Wolcott and Woodbury. Safe Haven works under the guidance of Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formerly CONNSACS), the states coalition of community based sexual violence crisis centers. Safe Haven is one of only nine member centers across the state that provide these specialized and essential services.

We respectfully ask that you carefully consider any cuts to an already stressed nonprofit human services system that provides help to victims and survivors of sexual assault and their families. We already struggle to meet the high demand for services and need to help these individuals recover from the trauma. Further cuts to this system will be devastating and leave many victims and their families with no place to turn for help.

We also respectfully oppose the proposed plan to cut and consolidate funding for victims of sexual violence into a general fund, and ask that you please consider its potential impact on an already fragile system. If the Governor's budget recommendations are accepted by the Legislature, we would be competing for reduced funds with: Public Health Personal Services, Public Health 'Other Expenses', Children's Health Initiatives, Childhood Lead Poisoning, Children with Special Health Care Needs, Maternal Mortality Review, Community Health Services, and Genetic Diseases Programs. Under this proposal, without knowing or maintaining a funding level from year to year, it would be difficult to manage our non-profit; to keep employees to maintain even the most fundamental services for

survivors. We understand and respect the reality of the State's current fiscal position; however, we are also concerned about the future of sexual assault crisis service programs in the state.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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