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Testimony in opposition to SB 1011
An Act Increasing the Marriage License Fee and Surcharge
March 17, 2017

Senator Fonfara, Senator Frantz, Rep. Rojas, and members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee:

As the Public Policy Assistant for Family Institute of Connecticut Action and an engaged man of 24 to be married in May of 2017, I oppose SB 1011, or any other measure which seeks to threaten marriage in our state. An increased surcharge or, more aptly named, tax on marriage imposes an undue hurdle to adults making the life-long commitment to be married. Marriage is the cornerstone of our culture that creates families and should be celebrated and promoted wherever possible. An increased tax on marriage would not only reduce marriage rates overall, but would amount to discrimination against income-insecure couples who desire to get married. This threat to families would have a cascading negative impact on our state both socially and fiscally.

SB 1011 stands in direct opposition to the goals of the Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood initiative (HMRF) sponsored by the Administration for Children & Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, by reducing the number of people who can afford to access their fundamental right of marriage. Decreasing access to marriage through increased taxes should be opposed by this committee. Protecting, supporting and encouraging marriage has long been a responsibility of our elected officials. So much so, that former President Barack Obama encouraged access to marriage resources in his praise of marriage advocacy below.

"...Finally, preliminary research shows that marriage education workshops can make a real difference in helping married couples stay together and in encouraging unmarried couples who are living together to form a more lasting bond. Expanding access to such services to low income couples...should be something everybody can agree on..." (Barack Obama, Audacity of Hope, 2006, p.334).
It is unfortunate that not everyone can agree on this matter, as SB 1011 denies marriage access to low-income adults and is a misguided solution in finding funding for sexual assault and domestic violence prevention programs.

Funding for sexual assault and domestic violence prevention programs ought to be levied from a surcharge/tax imposed on pornographic media and hook-up apps that contribute to sexual assault and domestic violence, as opposed to marriage, which prevents those very things. It is logical and just that the people engaging in practices with known links to increased sexual violence, fund the prevention programs of the very same practices they are exposing themselves to. A punitive tax on the institution of marriage however, which reduces sexual violence, will only further endanger the public and is a bad public policy decision.

The fiscal cost to people who are victims of sexual violence cannot be quantified, yet, any decrease in marriage and increase in sexual violence as a result of this legislation will far outspend the benefit from the increased revenue from the increased tax. Where possible, all measures should be taken to prevent sexual violence. Therefore I ask this committee to double down on it’s commitment to sexual justice by, increasing funding for marriage resources and funding sexual violence prevention from a more appropriate source. Data compiled from the Healthy Marriage Initiative archives posted below, outlines the positive fiscal and social impact of healthy marriages on individuals, families and society. As legislators, please defend and encourage healthy marriages, protect us from sexual violence and reject SB 1011.

In-Text Source:

Background
- In 1996, Congress made the following findings:
  - Marriage is the foundation of a successful society.
  - Marriage is an essential institution of a successful society which promotes the interests of children.
  - In order to encourage States to strengthen marriages, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 that was reauthorized under the Claims Resolution Act of 2010 provides funding of $150 million each year for healthy marriage promotion and fatherhood.
Goals

- Increase the percentage of children who are raised by two parents in a healthy marriage.
- Increase the percentage of married couples who are in healthy marriages.
- Increase the percentage of premarital couples who are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage.
- Increase the percentage of youth and young adults who have the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about healthy relationships including skills that can help them eventually form and sustain a healthy marriage.
- Increase public awareness about the value of healthy marriages and the skills and knowledge that can help couples form and sustain healthy marriages.
- Encourage and support research on healthy marriages and healthy marriage education.
- Increase the percentage of women, men and children in homes that are free of domestic violence.

Benefits:

For Children and Youth
Researchers have found many benefits for children and youth who are raised by parents in healthy marriages, compared to unhealthy marriages, including the following:

1. More likely to attend college
2. More likely to succeed academically
3. Physically healthier
4. Emotionally healthier
5. Less likely to attempt or commit suicide
6. Demonstrate less behavioral problems in school
7. Less likely to be a victim of physical or sexual abuse
8. Less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol
9. Less likely to commit delinquent behaviors
10. Have a better relationship with their mothers and fathers
11. Decreases their chances of divorcing when they get married
12. Less likely to become pregnant as a teenager, or impregnate someone.
13. Less likely to be sexually active as teenagers
14. Less likely to contract STD’s
15. Less likely to be raised in poverty

For Women
Researchers have found many benefits for women who are in healthy marriages, compared to unhealthy marriages, including the following:

1. More satisfying relationship
2. Emotionally healthier
3. Wealthier
4. Less likely to be victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or other violent crimes
5. Less likely to attempt or commit suicide
6. Decrease risk of drug and alcohol abuse
7. Less likely to contract STD's
8. Less likely to remain or end up in poverty
9. Have better relationships with their children
10. Physically healthier

For Men
Researchers have found many benefits for men who are in healthy marriages, compared to unhealthy marriages, including the following:
1. Live longer
2. Physically healthier
3. Wealthier
4. Increase in the stability of employment
5. Higher wages
6. Emotionally healthier
7. Decrease risk of drug and alcohol abuse
8. Have better relationships with their children
9. More satisfying sexual relationship
10. Less likely to commit violent crimes
11. Less likely to contract STD's
12. Less likely to attempt or commit suicide

For Communities
Researchers have found many benefits for communities when they have a higher percentage of couples in healthy marriages, compared to unhealthy marriages, including the following:
1. Higher rates of physically healthy citizens
2. Higher rates of emotionally healthy citizens
3. Higher rates of educated citizens
4. Lower domestic violence rates
5. Lower crime statistics
6. Lower teenage pregnancy rates
7. Lower rates of juvenile delinquency
8. Higher rates of home ownership
9. Lower rates of migration
10. Higher property values
11. Decreased need for social services