

**SB 1011, An Act Increasing the Marriage License Fee and Surcharge
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee Public Hearing
March 17, 2017**

Good afternoon, Senator Fonfara, Senator Frantz, Representative Rojas, and members of the Committee. My name is Georgette J. Katin and I am the Executive Director of the Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut, Inc. (SACCEC), one of the nine community-based agencies which are members of the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence.

The mission of SACCEC is to provide comprehensive assistance to victims of sexual violence through a range of free and confidential services and to assist the community in prevention efforts through educational programs. We serve victims in 41 towns in eastern Connecticut including Windham, Mansfield, Putnam, Plainfield, Norwich, Groton, New London and Colchester. SACCEC strives to reduce added trauma to victims by providing immediate intervention services such as accompaniment and compassionate support during medical evidence collection exams and contacts with law enforcement investigators. We provide evidence-based, trauma-informed counseling services to adult survivors, children, adolescents, parents and caregivers. SACCEC provides community education and sexual violence prevention programs to schools, professionals and the public.

We urge your support of SB 1011, which will increase revenue to support sexual and domestic violence services provided by community-based nonprofits in Connecticut. The Marriage License Surcharge (MLS) is a fee paid by those obtaining a marriage license in Connecticut. Since its implementation in 1992, the MLS has not been increased from the current amount of \$20. The surcharge is distributed as follows:

- \$1 is retained by the municipality
- \$19 is deposited into a fund for equal distribution by the Department of Public Health to support sexual violence services and the Department of Social Services to support domestic violence services.

Under this proposal, the MLS will be increased to \$35, which means that \$34 will go directly to support services provided by community-based nonprofits to victims of sexual and domestic violence. Marriages in Connecticut have held steady in recent years with approximately 19,000 marriage licenses obtained per year. This means that annual revenue to help support sexual and domestic violence services could increase to about \$646,000 per year.

Economic and fiscal challenges continue to impact sexual and domestic violence services at both ends - financial supports are being reduced for service providers while victims seeking our help are experiencing more acute, complex problems due to the impact of the economy on their own personal lives. With flat or reduced state General Fund dollars available for victim services, we urge your support to increase this alternate source of revenue.

If passed, the total cost for a marriage license in Connecticut would become \$50 (this includes the \$35 MLS and the license fee that is retained entirely by the municipality). This is comparable to surrounding states with statewide marriage license fees, including New Hampshire (\$50 total fee, which includes a \$43 MLS) and Vermont (\$60 total fee, which includes a \$35 MLS). The proposal impacts a limited number of Connecticut residents, including a number of non-residents who choose to get married at any number of premiere wedding venues in the state and therefore obtain a Connecticut marriage license.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Georgette J. Katin

Georgette J. Katin,
Executive Director