



Connecticut Department of Public Health

**Testimony Presented Before the Finance, Revenue and
Bonding Committee**

March 17, 2017

**Commissioner Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.
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Senate Bill 1011 - An Act Increasing the Marriage License Surcharge

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports Senate Bill 1011, which would increase the marriage license surcharge. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

Currently, a twenty dollar surcharge is paid by persons obtaining a marriage license. Revenue collected from this surcharge is provided to the Department of Social Services to provide funding for shelter services for victims of household abuse and to the Department of Public Health to provide funding for rape crisis services. This bill would increase the \$20.00 surcharge to \$35.00. The marriage license surcharge has not been raised since it was established in 1992.

Raising the marriage license surcharge would ensure vital rape crisis services in Connecticut are maintained. The Department provides funding to nine rape crisis services programs throughout the state to support rape crisis intervention and advocacy services for thousands of child, adolescent and adult victims of sexual violence each year. These effective public health services assist our residents at a time when the demand for both prevention education and survivor services is growing. Last year alone, the rape crisis services programs provided over 25,000 hours of advocacy and support. This statewide advocacy and support includes: 24-hour hotlines; hospital, police and court accompaniments; support groups and crisis counseling for survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones; and community education and professional training to over 60,000 Connecticut residents.

Rape-related emergency department visits were most common for girls age 15 to 19 years old. Data indicates that the rate of emergency room visits for rape is experiencing an upward trend among all race and ethnicity groups.

Thank you for your consideration of this information.

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