

**CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE
TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE** 
Support. Advocate. Prevent.

Testimony of Laura Cordes, Executive Director
Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence
In Support of H.B. 5173 **AN ACT PROTECTING THE PRIVACY OF VOTERS**
Government Administration and Elections Committee
Monday, February 26, 2018

Good morning, Senator Flexer, Senator McLachlan, Representative Fox and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee.

My name is Laura Cordes. I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence. For over 35 years The Alliance has been the state's leading voice to end sexual violence and the statewide coalition of community-based sexual assault crisis services programs whose mission is to end sexual violence and ensure high quality, comprehensive and culturally-competent sexual assault victim services.

On behalf of our member centers and the victims and survivors we serve, I want to thank you for the opportunity to come before you in support of H.B. 5173 *AN ACT PROTECTING THE PRIVACY OF VOTERS*.

Secretary of the State Denise Merrill has wisely considered the need to protect the privacy of Connecticut residents and proposed a set of common sense protections that I believe will not only be appreciated by current voters but by citizens who may be reluctant to register due to privacy concerns.

In the aftermath of an assault many survivors of sexual violence are concerned about their privacy and safety. As survivors heal from their trauma and work to rebuild their lives and the trust and control that they were robbed of, it is not uncommon for them to carefully consider if, when and how they will choose to share their information. Many remain concerned that the person who harmed them or the offender's family or friend will try to find and harm them again.

Whether they are a survivor who has moved here from another state, or a current resident concerned about their offender finding them when they are released from prison, many survivors opt out of activities that require the use of their name and street address, including registering to vote, for fear that it will be publicly shared.

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Section 1 (b)(3) in this bill helps to address this concern and would allow voters to request that their information be withheld from public disclosure if they believe it is necessary for their own safety or their family's safety. This provision would be beneficial to survivors and offer an assurance of privacy that may keep many of our citizens engaged or re-engaged as voters.

Survivors should not have to choose between their safety and peace of mind, or their right to vote. We encourage your support of HB 5173.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence
Our Member Centers



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