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Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate  
Submitted to the Public Safety and Security Committee  
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Good morning Senator Larson, Senator Guglielmo, Representative Verrengia and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. My name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT** of:

Governor's Bill No. 17, An Act Promoting Fairness in Access to Information, Support and Justice for Sexual Assault Victims;

Crime victims in Connecticut have a state constitutional right to be treated fairly and with respect. While Connecticut has made tremendous progress to improve the treatment of and services available to victims of sexual violence, Governor's Bill No. 17 will further efforts to support victims of sexual violence.

In recent years, Connecticut, along with many states across the country, has acknowledged the failure of the state to process and test hundreds of sexual assault evidence collection kits. In 2015, Connecticut established timelines for the transmission of the sexual assault evidence collection kit to the state lab to address the backlog. Governor's Bill No. 17 proposes the use of barcodes and kit-tracking software to ensure that no sexual assault evidence collection kit is lost, mishandled or lingers on the shelf of a police department evidence room.

Additionally, Governor's Bill No. 17 will ensure that the protocols for the collection of sexual assault evidence include contacting a sexual assault counselor when a victim arrives at a health care facility. Sexual assault counselors are highly trained to assist a victim of sexual violence at the most traumatic time and when the support is needed the most.

Finally, Governor's Bill 17 requires the Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations to develop policies and procedures to ensure victims have access to information regarding the victim's evidence collection kit.

The Office of the Victim Advocate strongly urges the Committee's favorable report of Governor's Bill No. 17 in support of all victims of sexual violence. Thank you for consideration of this testimony.