Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Sarah Holmes, and I am a Community Educator and Victim’s Advocate at Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury, one of nine member centers of the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence. Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury provides sexual assault services to the towns of Beacon Falls, Bethlehem, Middlebury, Naugatuck, Oxford, Prospect, Southbury, Thomaston, Watertown, Waterbury, Wolcott and Woodbury.

Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury receives funding from the Department of Public Health that assists us in providing comprehensive supportive services for victims and survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. Our services include two 24-hour crisis hotlines, assistance with Temporary Restraining Orders, individual and peer group counseling, child counseling, art therapy, individual advocacy, an emergency shelter for women and their children, criminal court advocacy, community outreach, civil court advocacy, Spanish speaking bilingual advocates, D.O.V.E. educational classes, and prevention education programs for students in grades Pre-K-12 and college.

As a community educator, I have the privilege of working with youth in our community, facilitating prevention education programs to students in Pre-K through 5th grade. I have had the opportunity to provide sexual and domestic violence prevention education programming to 3,623 students in the Greater Waterbury region thus far during the 2018-2019 school year, with additional presentations scheduled from now until the end of the school year. Teaching children about dynamics of healthy relationships, the differences between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and touches, consent, and social-emotional learning can positively influence them in becoming healthy adults, and can help prevent domestic violence and sexual violence from happening on our communities.

The need for sexual assault invention services and prevention education is in more demand than ever. **We urge you to keep the funding for rape crisis intervention and prevention services at nothing less than level funding.**

Thank you for your consideration,

Sarah Holmes
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