

Testimony of Lucy Nolan, Director of Policy and Public Relations
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Thursday, February 14, 2019

Testimony on HB 6890 AN ACT REQUIRING BEST PRACTICES BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN RESPONSE TO REPORTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT, STALKING OR INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE.

Senator Haskell, Representative Haddad, Senator Hwang, Representative Hall and members of the Higher Education and Employment Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan, and I am the Director of Policy and Public Relations at the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of The Alliance on HB 6890, AN ACT REQUIRING BEST PRACTICES BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN RESPONSE TO REPORTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT, STALKING OR INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE.

The Alliance is the statewide coalition of nine community-based sexual assault crisis services centers. Our mission is to create communities free of sexual violence and to provide culturally affirming, trauma-informed advocacy, prevention, and intervention services centered on the voices of survivors. Last year certified sexual assault crisis counselors and victim advocates at our member centers and within the state's sex offender management and supervision probation and parole units, served more than 8,500 child, adolescent and adult survivors and provided prevention education and training programs to over 50,000 residents. Our legal team works with victims daily.

Connecticut is one of four states with statutes that protect college students who have been sexually assaulted, harassed, stalked or made a victim of intimate partner violence. The hard work this committee did in 2011, 2014 and 2016 created campus protocols that educate students on safe and healthy behaviors through the adoption of policies on sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Schools are aware and responsible for the behavior on their campuses by reporting to this committee in an annual report on stalking, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault. Perhaps one of the most effective policies this committee passed is training on the prevention of sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking through educational strategies like bystander intervention. We know that this works.

Campus resource teams ensure comprehensive, campus-wide responses to sexual violence. The teams work with students to educate them on acceptable behaviors, facilitate trainings for first responders, and coordinate services for survivors. Trainings include information about the neurobiological impact of trauma, influences of myths and stereotypes on survivors and their support networks, understanding perpetrators' behaviors and how to conduct an effective campus-based investigation which is critical.

Last November US Education Secretary DeVos promulgated new rules that would change the current Title IX response to sexual harassment and assault on campuses. The changes were significant and, if placed into regulation, will have the force of law. There are a number of areas in which there may be conflicts, from the definition of sexual harassment to reporting protocols and investigative practices. Connecticut has excellent best practices and this is an opportunity to investigate the state's response to

Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence Member Centers



potential changes while ensuring safe campuses for all students.

Given the many changes that may affect Connecticut's colleges and universities, this legislation allows for time to ensure that we continue to have strong, comprehensive and collaborative responses to sexual assault and harassment, intimate partner violence and stalking in our school communities. As the backbone organization for the Connecticut College Consortium to End Sexual Violence, The Alliance will continue to monitor and work with this committee to build the strongest possible response to ensure safe campuses.

Thank you for your continued attention to sexual violence and its prevention on our campuses.

Lucy Nolan

Lucy@EndSexualViolenceCT.org