

I am here today to support bill SB 3 An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment to end the five-year Statute of limitations imposed upon survivors of sexual assault crimes committed against them. I share my difficult personal testimony in the hopes it explains why "victims" need much more than five years to report these crimes against humanity, as I call them. Factors and influence can severely span the spectrum of whether or not someone is willing and able go to the police, knowledge of proper police reporting, support around going to the police, knowledge if any of the judicial system, children at home, safety in their current residence, stability in their job and home life, guaranteed safety from the perpetrator and so much more.

In my real life story at the time in the fall of 1990, I was a victim of what is known as the date rape drug I had very little to no experience with any of the above. I was drugged, raped possibly gang-raped the evening I quit my job at a record store by the boyfriend of the women who I worked for for about two years. I was at a bar contemplating leaving when I saw my assailant not knowing that night of the horrors to come. He promised me "just one dance/drink and I will leave you alone," he said. Unfortunately I fell for that line and barely sipped my drink, obliged to the dance floor and all went black to some eight or nine hours later I awoke in a strange bed, in strange room, naked on crisp sheets, moisture between my thighs, my head hurt like someone took a baseball bat, it hurt to see the light, my head whirred, my whole body ached.

Fear -there was no room for fear I had to see where I was- I knew I did not bring myself willingly to whatever hell I was in. I looked out the little window to the little room and saw a backyard of some sort with a tire swing, I thought I would throw up, it seemed like there were other cabins it hurt to focus. My mind whirred where was I, what happened the night before, I am cold, where are my clothes, I am shaking I don't recall if my assailant came out from another room and tossed them at me or if they were in a corner. All I know was I needed this smiling freak to get me back to my car, back to civilization. He appears with wet hair, smiling like the devil himself, I wanted to scratch his eyes out but I knew I neither had the energy or ability. I was cold in my tone and said I needed to get home for an interview which I actually did have that day. I put on my clothes as if I just had surgery it was as if my body was in a time warp... It hurt to walk....

I managed to get in the car and I felt numb and filled with dread and horror. It hurt to think so I looked out the window and it seemed like the endless miles of road and trees would never end, we finally came into a "safety" of other cars and highway I could just begin to breathe normally again. I was never so happy to see my car at the club still there.

Had I known like I discovered 6 years later that I was most likely given "roofie" and knew about "Rape Kits" and 24 hour reporting and "police reporting" and "laws against sexual assault" had someone I could call or could listen or hold me and let me cry or hear me scream or "support" me and help me through the confusion, perhaps I would have gone inside back to the club and asked if anyone saw anything that night or I would have my mother or sister or friend take me to the police station or better yet emergency room. In my life it was another man who violated me worse perhaps than the others and this time, I did not have "the facts" or any memory.

I was already without family support at this time as I was living with a no supportive friend and his mother in a room since my own mother had refused to stand up to my aunt and uncle whose son molested me as a young girl and she chose to stay loyal to them over me. Now on my own, I was faced with the sad reality bad things can happen to young women even outside the home. It was too much for me to process psychologically, so I went to my interview and did not tell anyone about the horrible night for a very long time.....

You see barely two years later despite my efforts to leave my dysfunctional family and build a new life, I was raped on campus by a fraternity member on out of state campus as growing up I was molested by my cousin and by my father. Women who are violated for a long time often do not come from a generation of women who stand up and immediately speak up and are sadly shamed into silence or ignorance or both. That is what their mothers did and so on and so on sadly many incest survivors are victimized later in life which is another huge reason why people need much more than five years. And regardless of support, the shame that overcomes one from such horrible experiences is enough to keep anyone far from the ER and the police station.

And even if they come from strong women and role models each story is unique. At some point, I found my voice, my esteem, and worth and decided to be a game changer breaking and leaping beyond the family history of women disempowered many due to the religious belief and creed that divorce was not allowed NO MATTER WHAT. For these reasons and more I shied away from marriage, being a mother, and carrying the bloodline of dysfunction.

I reported my father at 40 years old. I reported the incident about the campus rape within six years I had been back to CT. Women are traumatized by these unimaginable acts and then they are not met with a great deal of empathy or support out in the real world or in a police setting as they are always on the hunt for more information and "doing their Job", a phrase I have heard one too many times.

Healing and life are not linear. I have yet to report this incident to the police. Prior to going to California, I spent years on my own trying to find clues or missing pieces that would help identify this man with all efforts thwarted. Now I seek the courage to go to the police and hope there is no retaliation as I was informed my safety or privacy cannot be guaranteed by the police and since I do not live alone that puts me in a difficult situation.

The reality is that victims/survivors in the state of CT and across the US need far better legislative and judicial response. Clearly, as in my story, more time to process is required to breathe to heal to the ground, to find support. I thank you for hearing my testimony and hope it sheds light on the severity of the current statute of limitations. No one likes to "share" their story the same day, two months, two years ago even twenty years later and its truly sad that by now in an age of digital technology and advancement that sexual assault crimes which go back to the dark ages is still occurring on such a wide scale with little to no accountability for the offenders. Murder, bank robberies, financial crimes all seem to dominate in stricter sentencing and prosecution. CT needs to embrace stronger help and support for all survivors of sexual assault crimes and we need to build a bridge to the probably thousands of women who still walk in silence and shame without the tools or proper support to process and to heal.

Testimony of Lauren Bolstridge
Resident of West Hartford, Connecticut
Committee on Judiciary
April 1, 2019

Support: SB 3 An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

Good morning distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Lauren Bolstridge and I am a resident of West Hartford, Connecticut.

Thank you for allowing me to speak in support of SB 3, An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment. I am here today because the 5 year statute of limitations has personally negatively impacted my life. On May 17th, 2013 I was raped in my own home by someone who I had considered to be a friend. At that time, I didn't know how, and wasn't stable enough to process the rape. Consequently, I was diagnosed with PTSD. My rapist had many of the same friends that I did and I had very little support from those around me at the time. I didn't know how to speak about it and I couldn't even begin to think about seeking justice.

It took 5 years of cognitive behavioral therapy sessions once a week for me to feel even remotely like myself again, let alone ready to speak up. On April 6, 2018 I reported my rape to the West Hartford police station. I had known that the 5 year window was ending and I made sure to report my rape within that time frame. However, it took the judicial system 46 days to process my rapist's arrest, which turned out to be 4 days after the 5 year cut-off. My case was dismissed because my rapist wasn't arrested until 4 days after the 5 year statute of limitations had expired.

After 5 years of panic attacks, depressions, loneliness and shame, I had finally felt stable enough to seek justice, but when I did, the statute of limitations robbed me of that right. I was also robbed of the chance to prevent this crime from happening to other women because today, my rapist walks free because of the statute of limitations.

5 years is too short of a time frame. Many survivors struggle under the weight of PTSD and are not mentally and emotionally ready to face their attackers until much later, if at all.

I urge you to pass SB 3 An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment. There should be no time limit on justice.

Thank you.

Lauren Bolstridge