



Testimony of Carissa Conway
Committee on Judiciary
April 1, 2019

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

Oppose: SB 913 An Act Concerning the Extension of the Statute of Limitations for the Prosecution of Sexual Assault

Good evening Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Carissa Conway, and I am the Director of Prevention & Intervention Services at Women and Families Center (WFC). WFC is a nonprofit human service organization that has served Connecticut residents for almost 135 years. Our mission is to promote equity and quality of life through services that foster empowerment and independence. Our sexual assault crisis services program is one of the nine community-based member centers of the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formerly CONNSACS). WFC provides services to survivors living or working in Meriden, Wallingford, Cheshire, Middlesex County and Greater New Haven.

I am writing in support of SB 3, An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (and to show my opposition to SB 913 An Act Concerning the Extension for the Statute of Limitations for the Prosecution of Sexual Assault). For most sexual assault crimes, Connecticut law provides survivors of sexual violence with a mere five-year statute of limitations to bring their offenders to justice, or, to find redress in the civil court. Connecticut has the third shortest statute of limitations in the country and the shortest overall in New England. The impacts of sexual violence can last a lifetime, but for survivors of sexual violence, the chance to seek help through our criminal justice system does not.

Five years is not enough time for many survivors to come to terms with the unique experiences commonly following sexual violence: trauma; PTSD; and the blame, shame, and scrutiny received upon disclosing or reporting the abuse. For some, after being groomed it takes time for victims to realize the sexual assault was not their fault. The trauma may not be visible but it stops time for many victims. They need time to come to terms with what happened to their bodies and their psyches.

As a victim advocate, I recognize that victims need the right to take the time they need to disclose. Choosing to disclose is a process, survivors often feel out how a support person may respond. If a response is supportive, over time more information may be shared.

At 5 years, Connecticut's civil and criminal statute of limitations has one of the shortest time frames in the country for many victims of sexual assault. It is too short. 28 states have either no statute of limitations for a period of 20 years or more. Connecticut should follow in the footsteps of these states and not limit the time victims of sexual assault can seek justice.

I urge you to pass SB 3 An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment to give victims time.

Thank you.

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