

In Support of S.B.3: An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment
Jane Doe

The five-year statute of limitations to report my sexual assault was nearing close to the end before I was able to make a police report. At the time I didn't feel ready to go forward, but my chance to do it was running out so I had to. After the investigation the man who abused me was arrested and the case is still ongoing. Though I was able to make the time limit I had to rush, which made it even more emotionally grueling and chaotic.

It is no lie that it can be very difficult and revictimizing to report sexual abuse, face court proceedings and stand a trial. In my situation, the perpetrator groomed and manipulated me for years and sexually assaulted me throughout the course of that time. I went through years of being traumatized, confused, ashamed, and keeping secrets. But to make a report you have to be able to tell it all and do so clearly. Right off the bat the police asked invasive questions that I had for so long been unable to talk about. I needed strength to speak but was still uncovering layers of my trauma, struggling to just feel like a normal person let alone handle that kind of vulnerability again. As my memories were turned into evidence, resurfacing too much too fast was overwhelming and there were many times I became suicidal. But that's what dealing with PTSD and trying to report it under a time constraint is like—you must figure out how to be a survivor before you've fully had a chance to process what you survived. Not allowing enough time to process the first trauma before facing the second trauma of going forward is another injustice done to survivors of sexual abuse.

Due to lack of awareness or sensitivity to the impacts of trauma, victims of sexual abuse are often questioned about why they waited so long before telling the police and are made to feel like they're less credible because of a delayed disclosure. For me, it took several years before I even knew I could go to the police and had real support to do so. And despite making it within the 5-year window of time, in court the defense will still try to argue that my memory is inadequate. It shows that even if a victim takes some or all of the time they're entitled to take before making a report, their memory and the reason why they didn't do it sooner will still be scrutinized. What real purpose does the statute of limitations serve then, other than indulge the perpetrator's hope of escaping accountability so long as the victim stays silent long enough?

I'm still fighting for justice and for my healing, and I fight against the current statute that made it harder to do this. Please hear the voices of survivors who have been undermined by the five-year limit because of the extra burden it adds to the difficult task of reporting, or because it took away their chance to report entirely as time has run out. Please consider the survivors who have been victimized by serial sex offenders who should have been prosecuted years ago, but were able to continue abusing because the statute of limitations prevented previous victims from being able to make a report. Please eliminate Connecticut's statute of limitations because the perpetrator's danger to people doesn't end; their accountability shouldn't either. The survivor's fight in healing from trauma doesn't end; their opportunity to seek justice shouldn't either. Thanks for listening and please pass this bill.