

CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Support. Advocate. Prevent.

*Testimony of Dylan Figueiredo
Post-Conviction Victim Advocate- CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence
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

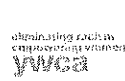
Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Dylan Figueiredo, and I am the Post-Conviction Victim Advocate for the New Britain and Torrington Offices of Adult Probation.

Thank you for allowing me to speak in support of the 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 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.

For a survivor of sexual violence, the effects of what they have been through don't end in the five years after the assault. The effects of sexual violence stay with a person for all of their life, no matter when the assaults occur. A survivor doesn't forget, and a survivor doesn't deserve to be forgotten while also being told that they had "long enough" to seek justice for what happened to them.

When someone says the word "victim" or "survivor" we as a society already have an idea of what the survivor is supposed to look like, feel, and behave. As a Victim advocate who has seen a multitude of cases, and supported a large number of survivors, I can guarantee that no one case has ever been the same as the next.

There are many reasons why a survivor wouldn't want to disclose an assault that they have experienced. A survivor isn't always ready to disclose because it is not always safe for them to do so. A survivor may not disclose because they themselves cannot come to terms that this has happened to them. A survivor may not disclose because they are scared of what is going to happen to them, as well as their families when they do so. And even more important, a survivor may not disclose because they don't think anyone will actually believe them. Society isn't currently built to protect and support survivors a too often when a survivor does gain the



courage to come forward and seek justice, they are ridiculed, discredited, and dehumanized by the systems sworn to protect and help them.

What's most important, however, is that it's none of our business why a victim doesn't disclose, or when they will comfortable disclosing because a survivor doesn't owe anyone an explanation on how they deal with their trauma. Our job as a society is to support and help a survivor whenever they do come to a place where they feel safe and comfortable enough to seek justice for what has happened to them.

In my experience, I have worked personally with victims who have held on to their trauma for years because they felt they couldn't come forward about the assault they experienced. I have worked with victims who tried to survive with anxiety, depression, night terrors, flashbacks, PTSD, and a number of other illnesses for all of their lives because they were not able to get closure or be heard. Giving a victim a short 5 years to disclose is telling a survivor that their trauma is not important enough and that they themselves are not enough to be heard and believed.

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. 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 the time they deserve.

Thank you.

Dylan Figueiredo