

Susan B. Anthony Project
SAFETY • HEALING • GROWTH

179 Water Street
Torrington, Connecticut 06790
860-489-3798
www.sbaproject.org

Testimony of Amanda Moreau MPH
Community Educator
Committee on Judiciary
April 1, 2019

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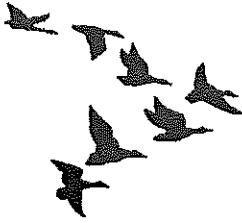
Support: SB 3 An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

Good evening Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Amanda Moreau, and I am one of the Community Educators at The Susan B. Anthony Project. At The Susan B. Anthony Project our mission is to promote safety, healing, and growth for all survivors of domestic and sexual abuse and advocates for the autonomy of women and the end of interpersonal violence. In the state of Connecticut, we are considered a dual agency. This means that our organization helps victims of both domestic and sexual violence. As a domestic violence crisis center we serve fourteen towns in the northwest corner, along with eighteen towns as a sexual assault crisis center.

Thank you for allowing me to support the SB 3, An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment. 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.

Sexual assault is unlike any other crime. It comes with burdens like: trauma, PTSD, blame, embarrassment, guilt, and shame upon disclosing or reporting the abuse. For some, it takes time for victims to realize the sexual assault was not their fault or that it truly was sexual assault. The trauma may not be visible but it stops time for many victims with flashbacks and for some crippling anxiety. They need time to come to terms with what happened.

This bill is important to me because I believe that a sexual assault crime is truly unique and heartbreaking. This is a crime where the victim is treated like the



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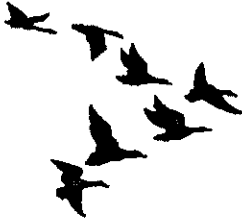
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criminal. Do we ever ask a bank attendant what they were wearing before the bank was robbed? Do we ever tell a store in the mall, maybe you shouldn't have made shoplifting so easy? Or do we ask the person who got rear ended in a car if wanted to be rear ended and they were just confused? Obviously these questions all sound ridiculous but, it is exactly how survivors of sexual assault are questioned. No wonder why according to the U.S. Department of Justice Rape is the most under-reported crime with 63% of victims not reporting the incident.

When someone is sexually assaulted they have just a mere 72 hours to go to a hospital to get an evidence collection kit (rape kit) done. The process is like reliving the traumatic experience all over again. While getting my Master's I volunteered at The YWCA in New Britain through their Sexual Assault Crisis Services. While volunteering I had the opportunity to accompany survivors through this three hour process. It starts with a verbal statement of exactly what happened while a nurse writes every word down. Then the victim's every orifice is swabbed for possible DNA. This includes their hair, under their nails, and genital area. The victim is also required to be completely naked while the nurse uses a light used to detect bodily fluids. Once the kit is done, the survivor also has the option to give up the clothes that they were wearing for possible DNA of the perpetrator. I am fortunate to say that I have not had to be the one to experience this. Even as a person who has not been raped, I would not want this to happen to me. I cannot imagine anyone going through this experience if they were not sure that they were assaulted. Thus, proving the opposition that these survivors are not lying. Giving victims more than five years for the painfully slow justice system to do its job is critical to not only survivors who do not do an evidence collection kit, but especially for the brave souls who endure their trauma not once, but twice by getting an evidence collection kit done.

My job as a community educator is primarily in prevention. While my job may not be in direct services, I was talking to a friend I met this past summer about my position at a sexual assault and domestic violence crisis center. He was surprisingly so interested in my work. While having our conversation he stated that he had some skeletons in his closet that he wanted to talk to me about. He then disclosed that as a child he had been sexually assaulted and it still bothers him to this day. Sexual assault is not something one just gets over. Being able to tell their story, and hopefully receive some sort of conviction can be closure to



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some survivors. However, Connecticut only gives survivors a short five years to quickly get over what happened to them enough to tell someone.

While Connecticut is one of the leaders in many progressive and modern topics, our sexual assault laws lag way behind the rest of the nation. 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.

Amanda Moreau