

Testimony of Claire Pritchard
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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 Claire Pritchard, and I am a Generation Action intern with Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. I attend Trinity College and work on campus there to promote Planned Parenthood's goals of policy, education, and healthcare.

Thank you for allowing me to speak in support 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 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 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.

5 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 scrutinization 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.

This bill is important to me because victims' situations can change vastly over the course of years, giving them new support to disclose. We must extend the statute of limitations to give victims this time and some justice by disclosing and having a fair trial of their offender.

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,
Claire Pritchard