



Treasurer Shawn T. Wooden

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
APRIL 1, 2019

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding **Senate Bill 3, *An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment***.

I applaud the committee's efforts to address workplace discrimination and to improve access to justice for victims of discrimination, harassment, retaliation and criminal sexual offenses.

The necessity for legislative action is borne out by the facts. A recent survey found that 81% of women and 43% of men experience some form of sexual harassment during their lifetime, and that the majority of incidents occur in public places, and commonly within the workplace.¹ This legislation would vastly improve awareness of sexual harassment policies for Connecticut workers, and support the development of online training and educational materials that would help public and private employers alike meet their respective training requirements under Connecticut law.

This legislation would also improve the enforcement of our workplace discrimination laws by extending filing deadlines, expanding CHRO's ability to bring civil action, and toughening penalties and damages that result from the adjudication process. Importantly, this bill would clarify actions employers may take to address workplace discrimination – allowing the deduction of wages when salaried employees are placed on a disciplinary suspension, providing for the automatic suspension of school administrators, and limiting changes to victim's working conditions without their approval.

Finally, this legislation would, if enacted, make necessary changes to various statutes of limitation to reflect the reality that victims of sexual crimes respond differently than victims of other crimes, as the majority of rape and sexual assault incidents go unreported.² While statutes of limitation exist to acknowledge the deterioration of evidence over time, states have acknowledged the serious nature of certain crimes and it's critically important that we extend those same considerations for the crimes of rape and sexual assault.

I thank the Committee for taking up this important piece of legislation. As someone who personally advocates for safe work environments, additional protections against discrimination, and improved justice for victims, I strongly support this bill.

¹ *The Facts Behind the #MeToo Movement: A National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault*, Stop Street Harassment, February 2018. (<http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Full-Report-2018-National-Study-on-Sexual-Harassment-and-Assault.pdf>)

² *National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010-2016* (2017), Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=245>