


CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Support. Advocate. Prevent.

Lucy Nolan, Director of Policy and Public Relations
Committee on Judiciary
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Support: HB 7314 An Act Concerning Crime Victim's Participatory Rights in a Violation of Probation Hearing
Support SB 880 An Act Increasing Fairness and Transparency in the Criminal Justice System

Good day, Senator Winfield, Senator Kissel, Representative Stafstrom, Representative Rehimbus and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Lucy Nolan and I am the Director of Policy and Public Relations at the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (The Alliance), the statewide coalition of Connecticut's nine community-based sexual assault crisis services centers. Our mission is to create communities free of sexual violence and to provide culturally affirming, trauma-informed advocacy, prevention, and intervention services centered on the voices of survivors.

Last year certified sexual assault crisis counselors, our legal team and victim advocates at our member centers and within the state's sex offender management and supervision probation and parole units, served over 8,100 child, adolescent and adult survivors and provided prevention education and training programs to over 50,000 residents.

On behalf of The Alliance and our member centers, I am here to speak in support of HB SB 7314 An Act Concerning Crime Victim's Participatory Rights in a Violation of Probation Hearing and SB 880 An Act Increasing Fairness and Transparency in the Criminal Justice System.

Recent estimates from the CDC show that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men experience some form of contact sexual violence during their lifetime. Sexual violence cuts across age, socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural lines; however, children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable. Disproportionately high rates of sexual violence are reported by survivors from oppressed and marginalized communities, such as women of color, member of the LGBTQ community and people with disabilities. More than 90% of children are abused by someone known to them, and often someone who is responsible for their care or wellbeing. More than 70% of adults are assaulted by someone they know.

Survivors of sexual violence experience trauma during and after their assault, which is often compounded by societal shame and victim-blaming. Many survivors experience both short and long-term negative mental and physical health outcomes as a result of this trauma. Some of the most common side-effects of trauma include depression, anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, chronic pain, and addiction. Sexual violence impacts every facet of a survivor's life and survivors often report lifelong struggles with the consequences of violence.



Many of the victims The Alliance serves have shared feelings of retraumatization throughout their interactions with the criminal justice system. The Alliance works collaboratively with the criminal justice system to increase support for victims, bolster the capacity of the law enforcement community to respond effectively to survivors, and increase the successful prosecution of cases of sexual assault.

Connecticut is a national leader for our collaborative approach to sex offender supervision and management. Sex offender supervision and treatment presents a variety of needs and considerations for both victims and offenders. Connecticut's collaborative model consists of key partners including probation and parole sex offender supervision officers, sex offender treatment providers, and The Alliance's Post-Conviction Victim Services (PCVS) advocates. While each partner has a distinct role, there are collective goals of promoting victim safety, community safety, and wanting offenders to succeed in order to reduce recidivism and prevent future victimization.

HB 7314 An Act Concerning Crime Victim's Participatory Rights in a Violation of Probation Hearing

This legislation continues what many of us have been working hard to achieve: a victim-centered approach in our criminal system which recognizes sexual assault victims as the primary clients of the justice system, and whose safety, rights and interest are paramount when designing and implementing management strategies for offenders. The victim-centered approach allows victims to participate in the criminal justice system recognizing the irrevocable harm to the victim by the sexual assault. Additionally, the Law Enforcement Act of 1994 supports the rights of a victim of a violent crime, including sexual assault, to speak at an offender's sentencing hearing and any parole hearing.

Impact statements to the court at the time of sentencing ensure that the sexual offender hears about the harm they caused directly from the victim and the consequence of their assault. In addition, it ensures the court hears the victim's words, rather than having them filtered through the prosecutors or probation officers. However, there is currently no opportunity for those who have been sexually abused to give a statement when the individual who committed sexual assault has violated probation or conditional discharge. We work with victims who have requested such an opportunity to speak at the hearing only to be rebuffed. This bill ensures the victim has the choice to either offer an in-person impact statement or a written statement, either of which must be considered by the court in its determination. This legislation offers victims the respect and dignity they deserve and honors the impacts of the crime of sexual assault on the victim.

The Alliance and the nine Sexual Assault Crisis Centers urge this committee to extend the voice of survivors by supporting HB 7314.

SB 880 An Act Increasing Fairness and Transparency in the Criminal Justice System

As a member of the working group on the sex offender registry of the Sentencing Commission, The Alliance underscored the need for an annual report enumerating the number of sexual assault cases and their outcomes presented in Connecticut's criminal courts, including the initial charge, plea, conviction, sentence, and indication whether the offender was on the registry at the time of the offense. We believe that collecting and analyzing data about sexual assault crimes will provide much-needed clarity about the

scope of these crimes, their outcomes, and gaps in policies that need to be addressed. In our work with victims, privacy remains a primary concern. Victim privacy should be delineated in the bill to explain exactly what information about a victim will be reported in the system; furthermore, the language "personally identifying" on line 96 is vague.

Despite the aforementioned privacy concerns, the bill promotes transparency and accountability which is important to both victims and advocates. Transparency in the criminal justice system will not only help defendants, as this bill is clearly meant to do but can allow victims of sexual assault and advocates to ascertain how the state moves forward with sexual assault cases and how the criminal justice system responds to victims of sexual assault. The information that this legislation will give us is necessary before any significant changes are made to statutes concerning crimes of sexual assault.

The Alliance and its nine-member Sexual Assault Crisis Centers urge this committee to support comprehensive data gathering and analysis to increase fairness and transparency of our criminal justice system through SB 880.

Thank you,

Lucy Nolan
lucy@endsexualviolencect.org