



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Member Organizations**

**The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services**  
Ansonia, CT

**The Center for Family Justice**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Women's Center**  
Danbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program United Services**  
Dayville, CT

**Network Against Domestic Abuse**  
Enfield, CT

**Domestic Abuse Services Greenwich YWCA**  
Greenwich, CT

**Interval House**  
Hartford, CT

**Chrysalis Domestic Violence Services**  
Meriden, CT

**New Horizons**  
Middletown, CT

**Prudence Crandall Center**  
New Britain, CT

**The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services**  
New Haven, CT

**Safe Futures**  
New London, CT

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**  
Norwalk, CT

**Women's Support Services**  
Sharon, CT

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**  
Stamford, CT

**Susan B. Anthony Project**  
Torrington, CT

**Safe Haven**  
Waterbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program United Services**  
Willimantic, CT

**Testimony Supporting**

**SB 1069, AAC Female Genital Mutilation**

**HB 6648, AAC Sexual Assault and the Absence of Consent**

**HB 6657, AAC Human Trafficking**

**Judiciary Committee  
March 24, 2021**

Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Fishbein, and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our 18 member organizations provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

**SB 1069**

CCADV supports this proposal to study female genital mutilation and develop educational and training efforts to curb this dangerous practice. While its practice is not known to be prevalent in the United States, increased migration may contribute to a rise in cases. The practice of female genital mutilation stems from a complex set of cultural, religious and socioeconomic factors, as well as harmful gender norms. It is sometimes motivated by beliefs that it will increase marriageability or reduce a woman's libido and therefore prevent extramarital affairs. Some studies have found a correlation between female genital mutilation and domestic violence.

Education has been shown to be one of the most powerful tools to creating change and eradicating female genital mutilation. The proposed study will identify knowledge and training in a number of relevant areas including communication and cultural competence, as well as clinical identification, management practices and service configuration. Potential effects from banning female genital mutilation will also be studied, which is important because criminalization may drive the practice underground and have a disproportionate impact on women who are often required by their culture to maintain the practice within their family.

**HB 6648**

This is a priority bill for our sister coalition, The CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence and we support their position. This bill seeks to define consent, which has been used in Connecticut's sexual violence laws but never defined. It codifies the Connecticut Supreme Court's definition of consent from *Efstathiadis v. Holder*, which states that consent is a "person's capable, deliberate and voluntary agreement to or concurrence to engage in a specific act of sexual intercourse or sexual contact."

At its core, this proposal says that sexual intercourse without consent is against the law. Our cultural understanding of sexual violence has come a long way but our laws have not kept pace. This proposal seeks to modernize Connecticut's sexual violence laws and we urge your support.

(OVER)

## **HB 6657**

CCADV supports this measure which reflects some of the recommendations of the Trafficking in Persons Council (TIP Council) of which we are a member. Sections 4 and 5 of the bill seek to clarify and strengthen Connecticut's definition of human trafficking by replacing "pays a fee" with "exchanges anything of value". Such a change would not only bring Connecticut's definition of human trafficking more in line with the federal definition, but it also addresses the sad reality of trafficking – victims are often given something other than money, such as drugs or housing. This change will close a significant loophole that may allow traffickers to avoid prosecution.

Sections 3 and 7 address one of the most persistent, ongoing challenges facing victims of trafficking – victim blaming and the criminal prosecution of victims for actions they were forced to take. For too long it has been suggested that these victims have made poor decisions that led to their situations. The fact is that traffickers force victims into criminal behavior all of the time. Doing so not only helps the trafficker avoid culpability, but it also serves as a mechanism to control the victim. If victims are able to escape their trafficker, they may be left with a criminal record for a crime they were forced to commit that makes their ability to stay safe and independent from their trafficker even more difficult. Language included in this measure provides juveniles with an affirmative defense in delinquency proceedings and makes it easier for adult victims to have their convictions vacated.

Connecticut, through the leadership of the TIP Council, has made great strides in addressing human trafficking here in our state. We urge your support of this measure.

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

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