

CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE



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Testimony before the Committee on Children

Support **HB 6417** AN ACT REQUIRING BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR CERTAIN EMPLOYEES OF YOUTH CAMPS

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Good afternoon Representative Linehan, Senator Anwar, and members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Olivia DeFilippo. I work at the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence, and I am a Masters of Social Work Candidate from the University of Connecticut. The Alliance is a statewide coalition of community-based sexual assault crisis centers, and the state's leading voice to end sexual violence. 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. I am here today to offer my support for HB 6417- AN ACT REQUIRING BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR CERTAIN EMPLOYEES OF YOUTH CAMPS.

In 2018, [CBS News](#) identified hundreds of sexual abuse cases that occurred at children's summer camps across the United States. They published that over 500 cases were reported in the past 55 years, and at least 21 of those cases were from 2018 alone.

Some of the other bills heard by the committee this year aim to educate parents, guardians, and youths themselves about the warning signs of grooming and sexual assault. We support these bills fully and recognize the benefits of these education processes. It is also important to remember that we are perpetuating rape culture if the only protection we can provide to potential victims is the message that victims are the ones that need to be educated in order to make sure they are not assaulted. HB 6417 will limit offender access to our children, but also allow for the responsibility on victims to be a last resort instead of their only line of defense.

The Alliance supports this legislation. As we have seen in Connecticut and across the country, sexual abusers use organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs, churches, and the Boy Scouts as places to find and groom children. Requiring background checks is a simple and effective strategy to identify people who should not be working with children in this capacity. Parents, guardians, and families send their children to places that they intrinsically trust and their employees must be properly vetted.

Thank you very much for your time, and for listening to my testimony today.

Olivia DeFilippo

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[EndSexualViolenceCT.org](https://www.EndSexualViolenceCT.org)

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