

CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Support. Advocate. Prevent.

Testimony of Lucy Nolan, Director of Policy and Public Relations Appropriations Committee

H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021. Department of Public Health - Rape Crisis Intervention and Prevention Services

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walked and members of the Appropriations 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. The Alliance is supportive of the funding for the Rape Crisis Intervention and Prevention Services ending on June 2021.

On behalf of our member programs and the victims and survivors we serve, I want to thank you for the opportunity to come before you this evening and for your history of supporting those who work every day with child, adolescent and adult victims of sexual violence. Our Member Centers have also submitted testimony to the committee giving an overview of their work in our communities.

We understand the current fiscal reality and budget constraints that the state faces, as well as the difficult choices that are set before you. There continues to be a need for frontline sexual assault crisis services and programs in our state. We ask that you continue to uphold the state's longstanding commitment to its residents of addressing sexual violence and that you keep funding for rape crisis intervention and prevention services.

Sexual violence is widespread and the rate continues to rise in Connecticut, partly because we see more people reporting and disclosing as the #metoo movement and stories of sexual violence are publicized. The physical and emotional trauma can have devastating short and long term health consequences on victims and their families. In the aftermath, they need compassion, support, and access to services and justice. The Alliance sexual assault crisis services provided through our member centers are the only programs in Connecticut that specialize in both the counseling and advocacy needs of sexual assault survivors and their supporters.

The Rape Crisis Intervention and Prevention Services funding is spread to The Alliance's nine-member centers work with survivors, their families, and in their communities. Advocates at local sexual assault crisis services programs provide services at all hours of the day and night including crisis counseling, support groups, accompaniment to hospitals, courts and police stations which is all free of charge. This kind of response is unique to sexual assault victim advocates, and it has a long-term positive impact on the physical health and emotional well-being of survivors of sexual violence.

Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence Member Centers



Often our advocates will be the only person there for the victim who they can count on to have no other agenda but their safety and peace of mind. This is especially important during this very difficult time after a sexual assault.

Sexual Assault Counselors proudly work to address the unique and emerging needs of all victims, including victims of child sexual abuse, campus sexual assault, prison sexual assault, survivors from ethnic and racially diverse communities and survivors from LGBTQ communities. Over 26% of the survivors we serve identify as Latinx, an increase in those we helped from last year. We operate the only Spanish speaking, free and confidential 24-hour hotline in the country.

Our advocates frequently answer calls and get out of bed at 3 am or go to the hospital with a victim for three, four, five or more hours to provide support during a forensic evidence exam. We help survivors understand their options and navigate a complex medical and criminal justice system. When a sexual assault survivor needs someone to talk to on a Sunday afternoon, victim advocates are available to take their call.

When our dollars are stretched further and further, positions at our programs are left vacant, victims must wait for services, and other providers and partners must wait for training. When budget constraints require staff to work long hours and forgo increased pay, many will not receive a livable wage, and qualified advocates have to choose between the important work that they love and leaving for higher-paying jobs in other sectors. Please continue to support these critical services for victims and survivors of rape and child sexual abuse with the funding for rape crisis intervention and prevention services as proposed in the Governor's budget.

Thank you.

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