



**The Center for
Family Justice**

Testimony Regarding

Appropriations Committee Meeting

February 20, 2020

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 afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the committee. The Center for Family Justice provided life-saving services to over 4,063 people in FY 2019. We provide free and confidential services to sexual assault survivors and their loved ones. Some of these services include our toll free 24-hour hotline, accompaniments throughout medical, court and police procedures, individual counseling, prevention education, and support groups. We serve victims and their children in the towns of Bridgeport, Fairfield, Easton, Stratford, Trumbull, and Monroe.

Funding for rape crisis programs in the Department of Public Health budget is essential for community based sexual assault crisis programs to provide crisis intervention and advocacy services to thousands of child, adolescent and adult victims of sexual violence. We, at The Center for Family Justice, are asking that you approve the budget that maintains the current funding for rape crisis intervention and prevention services.

It is important to note that a cut in funding, at any level, is contrary to our state's commitment to address sexual violence. With so much attention being drawn to campus sexual violence, sexual assault in the military and new federal and state laws encouraging collaboration have victims step forward, now is not the time to cut direct support to the victims and survivors of sexual violence who need our help and support to seek care and justice. Rape crisis services are the only programs in our state that specialize in the counseling and advocacy needs of sexual assault survivors

The Center for Family Justice staffs free and confidential 24/7 hotlines in English and Spanish. We provide accompaniment and support for victims at the hospital, police stations and courts. We provide access to pro bono legal services specifically for victims of sexual violence to ensure their rights are not being violated. We provide support groups to victims of sexual violence so that they can begin to heal and begin their journey toward survivorship. Additionally, we provide area colleges, universities, and school age children with essential prevention education services. With our agency, and the other

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member agencies of The CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence, victims and survivors would not have access to these services because these services are not provided by any state agency.

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Recently, after reading a news article about a high profile case involving sexual assault, a woman in our catchment area reported a very serious sexual assault to her local police. The police immediately connected this woman to our office so that she could begin receiving crisis intervention services, which in this instance turned out to be life-saving, as the woman was so distraught as to contemplate taking her own life. Without the essential rape crisis line item in the state budget, The Center for Family Justice would not have the funds to provide even remotely adequate services to the victims of sexual violence in our area.

On behalf of The Center for Family Justice, and all of the victims of sexual violence in our state, we respectfully request that you approve the budget and not cut any funding for rape crisis services. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.


Angela Schlingheyde

Director of Civil Legal & Court Advocacy Services

The Center for Family Justice

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