



SAFE HAVEN
OF GREATER WATERBURY, INC.

Testimony of: Heather Francisco
Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury

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

February 21, 2020

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walked and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Heather Francisco, and I am an Adult Advocate at Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury. Safe Haven provides supportive services to survivors of sexual violence residing in Bethlehem, Beacon Falls, Middlebury, Naugatuck, Oxford, Prospect, Southbury, Thomaston, Waterbury, Watertown, Wolcott and Woodbury. All of our services free and confidential. 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.

The funding we receive from The Department of Public Health allow us to provide supportive services to victims and their families. In the past year we provided these services to approximately 450 individuals. Many of those served are minors. Our center has one of the best child and family advocacy programs in the state. We work very closely with our local Child Abuse Investigation Team, as a result we are able to provide comprehensive services to young victims and their families. These efforts make a difficult time more bearable for families experiencing sexual trauma.

Another area Safe Haven shines is outreach to underserved populations. We work very closely with survivors who are experiencing homelessness, those with disabilities, those suffering from addiction, and those who are criminally justice involved. Our advocates go into the community and provide services to these individuals in collaboration with other service providers breaking down barriers to accessing services for vulnerable populations. For example I facilitate a psychoeducation group in a day program that provides services to those with serious mental health disabilities. I have made many connections in this setting with survivors who otherwise may not be able to access such services. This is a vital service for this population because research shows that persons with disabilities are seven times more likely to be abused than the general population.

Sexual assault intervention services are in more demand than ever. We have seen an increase in service request in the last few years. Survivors are feeling more empowered to come forward and as result more people are seeking much needed support.

Survivors need our support and services. While there is continued need and increased cost we urge you to keep the funding for rape crisis intervention and prevention services at nothing less than level funding. Thank you so much for your time and consideration. We appreciate all your hard work up at the capital!

Thank you.

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