

Judiciary Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5414
AN ACT CONCERNING LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL
Title: ASSAULT.
Vote Date: 3/28/2024
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
3/11/2024
PH Date:
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

CO-SPONSORS:

Rep. Kate Farrar, 20th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

For victims of sexual assault, they can feel concerned that they will be punished legally for speaking out. This bill would add victims of sexual assault to the list of protected classes under CHRO.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language adds victims of trafficking and stalking to the list of protected classes. It also requires additional training for state employees related to trafficking in persons and stalking and requires CHRO to consult with advocates on such training.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

External Affairs, Judicial Branch: They take no position on the policies in the bill, but request two amendments. They asked for clarification in section two regarding the one hour minimum of training and education related to domestic violence and sexual assault, with the suggested clarification to specify if it is one hour in total for both domestic violence and sexual assault or one hour for each. In addition, they suggest that C.G.S. section 4a-60 be amended to add "status as a victim of sexual assault" to those classes of individuals protected from discrimination in the awarding of public contracts, since sexual assault victims would become a protected class in the state's nondiscrimination statutes.

Natasha Pierre, State Victim Advocate, Office of the Victim Advocate: She testified in support of this bill because it will provide legal protections against discrimination for victims of sexual assault, including for employment, housing, and education. She stated that victims of sexual assault face many of the same barriers that victims of domestic violence encounter and should therefore have the same protections against discrimination.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Beth Hamilton, Executive Director, Alliance to End Sexual Violence: She testified in support of this bill which will provide protection from discrimination for victims of sexual assault and increase training and information regarding sexual assault. She explained that it adds victims of sexual assault to Connecticut's list of protected classes and creates a one-hour training for all state employees about sexual assault.

Meghan Scanlon, President & CEO, CCADV: She testified in support of this bill in expanding anti-discrimination laws to include victims of sexual assault. She explained that victims of sexual assault sometimes lose their jobs because of absences or job performance issues that stem from the trauma they are experiencing; she believes that they need supportive workplaces that will protect them.

Kate Farrar, State Representative, CGA: She testified in support of this bill because it seeks to protect sexual violence victims from discrimination in the same way that victims of domestic violence are protected. She stated that trauma from sexual assaults can deeply affect victims' daily lives and they need security as they heal. She explained that the bill also adds sexual violence to employee education like what they currently have for domestic violence.

Mary Lee Kiernan, President & CEO, YWCA Greenwich: She testified in support of this bill which will mandate employers to display information about resources for survivors of sexual assault and requires state agencies to be trained on sexual assault just as they are on domestic violence. She explained that it will also outlaw discrimination against sexual assault survivors, which can occur in many ways including the refusal to hire, termination or discharge, denial of leave, or different compensation.

Gretchen Raffa, Vice President Public Policy, Planned Parenthood: She testified in support of this bill, stating that it is important that sexual assault victims have the same security as a protected class as victims of domestic violence are so they can have continued access to their jobs, homes, and financial security as they pursue healing, justice, and wellbeing.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Hillary Desideraggio

Date: 4-2-24