Testimony regarding Registration, Management, and Sentencing of Sex Offenders

Connecticut Sentencing Commission
January 25, 2017

Good morning members of the Commission. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state’s leading voice for victims of domestic violence and our 18 member organizations that serve them. Our members provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

We urge you to evaluate any potential changes to existing state sentencing laws for sex offenders through a lens of trauma-informed, victim-centered needs and safety. Sexual violence can result in a lifetime of negative consequences for the victim that she or he can often not leave in the past after a certain period of time. One poor choice by an offender can lead to chronic physical and psychological problems for the victim - depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders that will likely follow them for the rest of their life. Understanding and prioritizing this impact when determining an appropriate response to sex offenses is critical to improving outcomes for victims of sexual violence.

Given the lifetime impact on the victim, it is understandable that many victims become frustrated and feel further violated by lenient sentences and plea deals. Still, in 2017, any victim dealing with the aftermath of sexual violence will have her or his entire sexual history scrutinized as people search for the role they believe the victim played in her or his own victimization. When considering issues related to sentencing, changes in probation or parole, or retroactive changes to placement on Connecticut’s Sex Offender Registry, please consider the trauma that a victim is subjected to making multiple statements about the abuse suffered and continually having their life scrutinized. The only person responsible for a crime of sexual violence is the offender and they are the only person who should face consequences from Connecticut’s criminal justice system.

The impact of each step in sentencing on the victim and greater community should be the primary concern as they are the ones that our criminal justice system is intended to protect. We urge this Commission to ensure that victims are appropriately supported throughout the sentencing process. Ensuring timely notification and access to victim advocates is essential to this support.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

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