NATASHA M. PIERRE, ESQ.
State Victim Advocate

Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Thursday, February 26, 2015

Good morning Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

Senate Bill No. 636, *An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent*

Although Connecticut has made tremendous progress to address sexual violence on college campuses across the state, more needs to be done to ensure that students who report an alleged sexual assault to the academic institution are not further victimized by the deficient policies of that institution. Senate Bill No. 636 will promote the fair and just treatment of students consistently throughout the state.

The issue of "consent" in sexual assault matters is not new to the legislature, policy makers, law enforcement, sexual assault service providers, and certainly, victims of sexual assault. An alleged perpetrator of sexual assault needs only to offer "consent" as his/her defense and the dynamics of an investigation shift from the actions of the perpetrator to the actions of the victim. Establishing an affirmative consent threshold will balance the investigative field in sexual assault cases, even if only on the campuses of our institutions of higher education.

Senate Bill No. 636 will move sexual assault investigations on college campuses away from the "no means no" hurdle to the "yes means yes" standard of accountability. I strongly urge the Committee's favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Natasha M. Pierre, Esq.
State Victim Advocate

505 Hudson Street 5th Floor, Hartford, CT 06106 ▪ Phone: (860) 550-6632 ▪ Fax: (860) 560-7065 ▪ www.ct.gov/ova