

The Connecticut General Assembly

House Democrats



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BIPARTISAN WOMEN'S CAUCUS MEMBERS REPS. GILCHREST, FARRAR, KAVROS DEGRAW AND KLARIDES-DITRIA HOST PANEL DISCUSSION AND SCREENING OF VICTIM/SUSPECT

Documentary investigates cases of women who report rape being charged with false reporting.

Bipartisan Women's Caucus members, Reps. Jillian Gilchrest (D-West Hartford), Kate Farrar (D-West Hartford, Newington), Eleni Kavros DeGraw (D-Avon, Canton) and Nicole Klarides-Ditria (R-Beacon Falls, Derby, Seymour) hosted a panel discussion and screening of Victim/Suspect, a documentary that brings attention to a disturbing issue of law enforcement disregard and disbelief of women reporting sexual assault.

The documentary quotes a statistic of over 460,000 annual cases of sexual assault, and cases of law enforcement accusing victims of manipulating for personal benefit, damaging the reputation of perpetrators, or otherwise lying about their experiences; in many cases, questioning techniques coerced women into pleading guilty and victims charged and arrested for false reporting, cases closed, and perpetrators never questioned.

"When the filmmaker reached out to me a few months ago, I was immediately interested in learning more because we had a situation like the ones described in the documentary happen in Canton. I'm grateful we are showing the film at the Capitol to shine a light on the issue. Survivors need to feel comfortable reporting sexual assault without fear of being made the suspect," **Rep. Kavros DeGraw** said.

"This is an issue that needs to be brought to light for the sake of justice and equal protection under the law for women across the country - coercing women to plead guilty is not justice," **Rep. Gilchrest** said. "Law enforcement need to adequately investigate reports of sexual assault and we are committed to enacting policies that will get us there."

"The documentary Victim/Suspect and the panel discussion that followed highlights the importance of reevaluating our approach to investigate sexual assault," said **Representative Farrar**. "Every report of sexual assault deserves an unbiased and thorough investigation that recognizes the victim's immense trauma. We must work together to dismantle the culture of silence and victim-blaming that perpetuates sexual assault in our communities and country."

"Domestic violence, sexual assault, intimidation, or any other form of coercion, control, or violence toward women, must be stopped and victims taken seriously, and I applaud Ms. De Leon and this film for bringing this incredibly difficult issue to the public, and local and state elected officials' attention," **Rep. Klarides-Ditria** said.

The legislature's Bipartisan Women's Caucus, made up of female members of the House of Representatives and Senate from both political parties, is dedicated to advancing bills/ that will enhance the lives of women and their families across the state.

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