

The Connecticut General Assembly



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STUDENT-LED CAMPUS SEXUAL VIOLENCE BILL RAISED IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

(HARTFORD, CT) – Co-Chairs of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, **Senator Will Haskell (D-Westport)** and **Representative Josh Elliott (D-Hamden)**, raised the Every Voice sexual violence bill in the committee's Tuesday meeting to demystify sexual assault accountability on Connecticut college campuses.

The sexual violence bill is a unique piece of student-led legislation that is set to establish a statewide sexual misconduct climate survey and protect students who report being a survivor or witness of sexual assault. Originally filed during the Connecticut General Assembly's 2020 regular session as [Senate Bill 19](#), Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee leadership hope to pass a refiled version of the bill this session.

"College campuses should be safe and welcoming environments for all," said **Senator Haskell**. "Sadly, that's not the case today. This legislation takes two important steps in the right direction: the Every Voice Act will ensure amnesty for individuals who report sexual misconduct (either as a witness or a survivor) and establish a climate survey to evaluate our progress toward eliminating sexual misconduct on campus. I am ready to fight to make sure this bill makes it across the finish line this year."

"With this legislation, we intend to not only listen and learn from students about what they're experiencing on college campuses, but also protect those brave survivors or witnesses who report sexual assault," **Rep. Elliott** said. "We are aiming to create a safe and healthy learning environment for the state's students, and this bill is a great step in that direction."

"I'm proud to support this student-led effort to improve campus safety and better protect victims of sexual assault," said **Rep. Haines**. "Establishing a sexual misconduct climate survey will not only provide vital information about the situation on our campuses, it will give students an opportunity to make their voices heard on this important issue."

"Connecticut's college students are some of the brightest in the nation, and our state's success, depends on their success," said **Rep. Turco**. "No Connecticut student should live in fear of sexual assault, and this legislation takes a major step to helping us identify and understand where and how these serious violent attacks are taking place and how we can work to prevent them."

"The Alliance working closely with legislators and our college and university partners previously passed legislation enhancing the rights of survivors on campuses and placing Connecticut at the forefront of anti-sexual misconduct legislation in higher education. The Every Voice bill is a natural extension and the next step of that work to measure the success of our prevention programming and response to survivors while continuing the state's leadership on this issue," said Bridget Koestner, Campus Services Coordinator at the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence.

Alison Hagani, State Director of Every Voice CT, said, "Connecticut is not exempt from systemic oppression and violence; the data we do have on sexual violence, despite vastly underreported, show significant rates of campus sexual violence and barriers to support in our State. Ignoring this epidemic and refusing action does not will it away. As a student and a survivor, I am acutely aware that violence does not just hinder one's right to safety – it also limits the potential and opportunities of students in our State. No one bill can eradicate this violence on its own, but our student-led Every Voice bill is a crucial and urgent next step."

The 2020 version of the Every Voice bill received astounding bipartisan support and was only shelved due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Upon being raised in the committee meeting Tuesday, the bill's status can be tracked on the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee's webpage, <https://cga.ct.gov/hed/>.

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