

## EVC Testimony

Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott and distinguished members of the committee,

Good afternoon. Thank you all for being here. I know this has been a long couple hours. My name is Sara Thakur and I am a student at Yale University. I have lived in New Haven for the past 16 years and love this city and state with my whole heart. That is why I am here today because I know that we as a state can and should be doing better to help college students, like myself, with regard to sexual violence. Today I am testifying in favor of HB 6374. Sexual violence is a national epidemic that has impacted my life and the lives of students like me around the country and around Connecticut.

As you all know our bill has two main provisions, the amnesty policy and the biennial campus climate survey.

The Amnesty policy does not penalize students who were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when impacted by violence. This allows students to report without the fear of being penalized. This is especially important given the prevalence of drugs and alcohol on college campuses especially in instances of campus sexual violence. As a student who has been in this position I can assure you that this amnesty policy is crucial to send the message that you are not at fault, or punishable for the violence that has occurred against you.

The Yale administration is dangerously unaware of the privilege that they hold as an elite institution. This bill is supposed to be for every student in the state. The two-year frequency in the campus climate survey accommodates the shifting nature of student bodies at Connecticut's community colleges and state schools. At community colleges, which primarily grant associate's degrees on a two year schedule, many students will never be able to take a quadrennial campus climate survey. There are also the issues of low retention rates and incoming/outgoing transfer students. The four-year frequency that Yale suggests blatantly disregards these demographics of students. Our push for a bi-yearly campus climate survey would allow more students to communicate their experiences at the institution before moving, taking time off, withdrawing, or graduating. This provision is a necessity to accommodate all students around the state, not just the ones who have the privilege to go to institutions such as Yale.

My only time to take the campus climate survey was spring of my first-year, I wasn't even fully done with my first year and had more than 75% of my college experience left, yet I only had one chance to fill out this survey. Yale, do you think that that is fair? Do you think that collecting data every four years is really helpful for us students? This is not only unfair, but also a severe loss for the thousands of students at my college, and around the state. As my colleagues have mentioned the frequency of the survey will help get real-time data and help improve student lives going forward. The campus climate survey is an integral part of helping students, and I implore Yale to listen to their students and support this provision.

I know that the bill will improve students and survivors lives all across Connecticut. I know that when the bill passes, our state will be a leader in the country, paving the way to make campuses

safer and more supportive places for all students. I hope you will join me in believing this. To the legislators here today, you have the power to improve campus safety for all students, please report this bill favorably out of committee. Let's do our best to make sure young students never blame themselves for the sexual violence that they have experienced. We deserve to feel safe and comfortable on the campuses we are on.