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PROPOSED TITLE IX CHANGES WOULD ROLL BACK PROTECTIONS AND HARM STUDENTS

(EAST HARTFORD, CONN) The new Title IX regulations proposed by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos are an attack on our national progress addressing and preventing sexual violence. The proposed regulations announced today erect barriers for victims of sexual violence on campuses while authorizing schools to turn a blind eye to sexual harassment and violence.

We stand in strong opposition to the proposed rules.

As an organization that provides advocacy and legal support to survivors of sexual violence on college campuses throughout the state, we know the damage and harm caused by sexual harassment and assault, and the unique challenges that student survivors face in continuing their education post-assault.

Our strong history of addressing sexual violence in higher education created safer campuses. Reasonable timelines, codifying the use of the preponderance of evidence standard, and ongoing student and staff training created an atmosphere of respect.

The proposed regulations will undermine the comprehensive laws that we have in place in Connecticut to prevent and respond to sexual violence on college campuses, discourage survivors from reporting to their institutions, and will ultimately allow more sexual violence to go unchecked on campuses across the nation. If adopted, the new ruling will have a devastating impact on the landscape of sexual violence on campuses leaving victims with little to no recourse.

The process of reporting, disclosing, and participating in a misconduct process will be especially difficult and re-traumatizing for survivors. Previous regulations under the Obama administration acknowledged for the first time the trauma experienced by survivors and sought to remove barriers to report their assault to their school.

Under the proposed rules, victims can only report and request an investigation to a designated administrator before any investigation moves forward. A coach, resident advisor or teacher cannot act on a report. Students who are sexually harassed must reach a ridiculously high burden to show "severe" and "pervasive" and "offensive" harm "that denies the student access to the schools' education program or activity."

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Roadblocks to redress are everywhere, and the new standard of evidence needed is unusually rigorous for a campus-based sexual misconduct disciplinary process. The new regulations also allow students to cross-examine one another through a third party at disciplinary hearings, which can be a particularly traumatic prospect for survivors.

Ultimately, if adopted, these regulations would have the force of law without the consent of Congress. We must send a message to Secretary DeVos and the current administration that protecting those that do harm will not stand.

We will fight this. Join us.

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The Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence (formerly CONNSACS) is the statewide coalition of Connecticut's nine community-based sexual assault crisis services programs whose mission is to create communities free of sexual violence and to provide culturally affirming, trauma-informed advocacy, prevention, and intervention services centered on the voices of survivors