

2017 Legislative Priorities

Oppose Additional Cuts to Sexual Assault Crisis Service Funding Increase Marriage License Surcharge Fee

Funding in the Department of Public Health budget supports critical crisis intervention and advocacy services for thousands of children, adolescent and adult victims of sexual violence each year. Funding for these services has been cut over 13% over the last two years. Additional cuts threaten these vital public health and safety supports for Connecticut residents at a time where the demand for both prevention education and survivor services are growing. Last year alone, The Alliance community-based sexual assault crisis services programs, provide over 25,000 hours of advocacy and support including: statewide, 24-hour hotlines, hospital, police and court accompaniments, support groups, and crisis counseling for survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones, as well as community education and professional training to over 60,000 Connecticut residents. The Alliance has continued to engage Connecticut men as active bystanders to prevent sexual violence through the *Where Do You Stand CT?* campaign, and been the convener of the Connecticut College Consortium to End Sexual Violence, a coalition of university representatives and sexual assault victim advocates who work together to address campus sexual violence.

While already working with reduced funding levels, The Alliance supports increasing the Marriage License Surcharge (MLS) fee to a minimum of \$40 to support sexual assault and domestic violence services. Collected when a couple obtains a marriage license, the MLS has not been raised since it was established in 1992.

Remove the Statutes of Limitation in All Criminal and Civil Sexual Assault Cases

States across the country are expanding or removing the statute of limitations and Connecticut—which has one of the shorter windows (5 years in most criminal cases) —can support survivors by allowing time for them to report a crime, and for cases to be investigated and prosecuted. The impacts of sexual violence last a lifetime, but for survivors of sexual violence, the chance to seek help through our legal system does not. Victims of sexual violence—both children and adults—face numerous barriers to disclosing their abuse, including fear of their offender, fear of not being believed, or not being able to identify that what happened to them was abuse. Eliminating the civil and criminal statute of limitations for sexual violence cases doesn't eliminate the need for evidence, it simply gives those who have evidence the opportunity to hold the person who harmed them accountable.

Ensure That Victims Receive Full Restitution from Perpetrators

Many perpetrators of sexual violence are ordered to pay restitution to their victims as a part of their sentence. Frequently, when perpetrators violate their probation or parole, the judicial system sentences them to prison and allows the obligation to pay restitution to be discharged—meaning victims aren't being fully compensated by their perpetrator. The Alliance supports legislation to ensure that a perpetrator can't discharge their restitution obligation by violating their probation or parole.

Support Efforts to Establish Paid Family Leave

As a member of the Campaign for Paid Family Leave, The Alliance will continue to support the effort to establish a paid family leave program in our state. Having time to take care of oneself or one's family is an essential component for healing after surviving a sexual assault, and workers should be empowered to take that time without worrying about the security of their jobs, or paying their bills.

Protect Reproductive Health Care Rights and Access to Services

Access to reproductive health care services for victims of sexual violence are essential for survivors' wellbeing. A longstanding member of the Connecticut Coalition for Choice, The Alliance will work to uphold and maintain access to safe and legal reproductive health care in our state.

Ban the Practice of Youth Conversion Therapy

Youth conversion therapy is a widely discredited method of seeking to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity. The Alliance is a member of CT Equality, and as such, is an ally in the fight to create a more just society for the LGBTQ+ community by banning these harmful practices.

Raise Awareness and Support for the Prevention of Sex Trafficking

The Alliance is a standing member of the Trafficking in Persons Council, and supports the policy recommendations of the Council's *2016 Annual Report*.

Protect and Secure Victim Rights and Services

As sweeping reforms in Connecticut's juvenile justice system are proposed, The Alliance will work to center the needs of victims of sexual violence who have been assaulted by a minor in order to improve their access to information and services throughout the juvenile system.