



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

October 24, 2013

State Senator Beth Bye
Co-Chairman, Higher Education and
Employment Advancement Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3100
Hartford, CT 06106

State Representative Roberta Willis
Co-Chairman, Higher Education and
Employment Advancement Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 1802
Hartford, CT 06106

State Senator Toni Boucher
Ranking Member, Higher Education and
Employment Advancement Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3400
Hartford, CT 06106

State Representative Timothy LeGeyt
Ranking Member, Higher Education and
Employment Advancement Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 4200
Hartford, CT 06106

State Senator Joan Hartley
Co-Chairman, Public Safety and Security
Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 1800
Hartford, CT 06106

State Representative Stephen Dargan
Co-Chairman, Public Safety and Security
Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3603
Hartford, CT 06106

State Senator Tony Guglielmo
Ranking Member, Public Safety and
Security Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3400
Hartford, CT 06106

State Representative Janice Giegler
Ranking Member, Public Safety and
Security Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 4200
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear chairmen and ranking members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee and Public Safety and Security Committee:

We are writing in response to the recent federal discrimination suit filed against the University of Connecticut by several current and former female students. The students allege that the university failed to protect them from sexual assault and failed to adequately investigate and respond to numerous reported sexual assaults that occurred on campus.

The facts presented by the women with regard to the university's response to sexual assault and rape complaints raise troubling questions regarding our flagship public university and its commitment to protect and support female students. One student reports being told by a UConn police officer that "women need to stop spreading their legs like peanut butter or rape is going to keep on happening 'til the cows come home." Another woman states that when she reported being raped, the UConn police detective responded that "he did not believe me."

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If true, these responses by UConn officials to women reporting sexual assault are highly disturbing and unacceptable. All complaints of sexual assault need to be treated seriously and investigated and victims deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. As a public institution, UConn must be held to the highest standard of legal and ethical conduct. The complainants allege that UConn has violated federal anti-discrimination laws. Moreover, if these allegations are true, it would appear that the university has failed to abide by state laws requiring institutions of higher education to implement policies for the reporting and investigation of sexual assaults.

In 2012, the general assembly adopted legislation requiring public and private colleges and universities to adopt and implement protocols for responding to sexual assault complaints. Victims have the right to participate in disciplinary proceedings and be informed of the results. They also must be informed of their right to notify law enforcement and seek a protective order and be offered assistance from the university in doing so. The accounts given by the complainants suggest that these protocols were not followed.

We are requesting that your committees hold a joint public hearing at which UConn officials can provide information regarding policies and procedures for responding to sexual assault complaints and answer questions. It is our obligation as a legislature to ensure that state law is being followed and also to determine whether further improvements in the law are required to adequately protect victims of sexual assault.

For example, it is unclear from the reports how, if at all, UConn's student discipline process is coordinated with its law enforcement process. The unfortunate sense one gets from reading these accounts is that students may be encouraged to pursue the internal discipline process and only when that fails do they consider going to campus police, at which point, they may be told that evidence has been lost and it is "too late" to investigate. If this is true, then perhaps when sexual assault complaints are first brought to UConn's student disciplinary board they should be automatically forwarded to UConn police for investigation. In addition, students may feel that UConn police are protective of the university. Perhaps sexual assault complaints should be referred to state police for independent investigation.

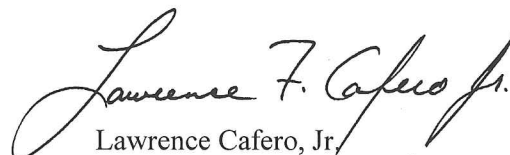
These are serious issues and questions that must be addressed. Therefore, we are requesting that you convene a joint public hearing of the Higher Education and Public Safety committees as soon as possible. The public must be assured that UConn is not only abiding by state and federal laws, but is doing all that it can to prevent sexual assaults on campus, support victims of sexual violence, and punish perpetrators. If there is a need to strengthen state law to protect victims and ensure proper discipline of perpetrators, we must identify those areas and develop proposals in advance of what will be a short legislative session.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



John McKinney
State Senator – 28th District
Senate Minority Leader



Lawrence Cafero, Jr.
State Representative -142nd District
House Republican Leader

cc: Senate President Pro Tempore, Donald E. Williams, Jr.
Senate Majority Leader, Martin Looney
Speaker of the House of Representatives, Brendan Sharkey
House Majority Leader, Joe Aresimowicz
University of Connecticut President, Susan Herbst