

Contact: Gloria Allred
(323) 653-6530
E-mail: gallred@amglaw.com

Today the Connecticut Legislature's Higher Education and Public Safety Committee held an informational hearing into the sexual assault reporting and investigative policy and procedures of public and private universities in Connecticut.

Four rape and sexual assault victims who were or are still students at the University of Connecticut (UConn) testified about how UConn failed them when they reported rapes, threats of sexual assault or sexual assault to which they had been subjected.

A decision to hold these hearings was made after these four brave young women and three others filed a 48 page complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (O.C.R.) outlining the specific details which they believe demonstrate that UConn denied them the legal rights to which they are entitled after they reported a rape or sexual assault.

The Governor of Connecticut became aware that the complaint was filed after these four young survivors held a news conference with me in Hartford to announce the filing of the complaint with O.C.R.

When asked about that at the time Connecticut Governor Malloy stated "I

absolutely support the idea of holding public hearings on UConn's sexual assault prevention and response procedures. As a parent and someone whose wife spent years working with victims of sexual assault, my heart goes out to the women that came forward this week. One of the most basic responsibilities of our institutions of higher learning is to keep our young people safe. If they have failed in that responsibility in any way, or if any victim of sexual assault has been treated with anything but the utmost respect, I will be outraged.”

Today, Governor, based on the testimony of my clients I think we should all be outraged.

UConn has clearly treated these survivors with disrespect and failed to support them when they reached out to the University for assistance. They had every right to expect support not disdain, due process, not disregard for their rights and compassion, not contempt for what they had suffered.

They also had every right not to have their motivation for speaking out questioned by UConn’s President, Susan Herbst. The harsh public response by President Herbst to the claims of these victims that UConn was deliberately indifferent to them can only serve to have a chilling effect on the willingness of other victims to report rapes or sexual assaults to the University for fear that they may also be singled out and targeted by UConn’s President and subjected to humiliation and retaliation by the University. Clearly many students on campus will feel that the UConn President’s response has created a hostile environment for rape victims and is an effort to silence them. Governor Malloy’s response stands

in stark contrast to that of President Herbst's.

We are very glad that the Connecticut Legislature held hearings today and permitted our clients to testify briefly. It was important to these victims and to many who support them that the Connecticut Legislature and the Governor wished to hear from them. That is an important first step. However, we still want justice for our clients and changes at UConn and their approach to sexual violence.

We are not just concerned about what policies and procedures that they say that they have. We are also concerned about how those policies and procedures are implemented or fail to be implemented.

My Connecticut co-counsel Nina Pirrotti, and I will continue our efforts to bring UConn into compliance with federal law, so that other young women will not have to suffer what our clients have been forced to endure.

These young women are entitled to enjoy the protection of the law and they should not be denied equal educational opportunity because they are female and rape or sexual assault victims.

We are inspired by their courage as we move forward to assert and vindicate their rights.

Gloria Allred

Representing

Carolyn Luby, Kylie Angell, Erica Daniels and Rosemary Richie

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