

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-977

AN ACT PROTECTING PARTICIPANTS IN TITLE IX PROCEEDINGS AT

Title: INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Vote Date: 3/13/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/4/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Rep. Gregory Haddad, 54th Dist.
Sen. Mae Flexer, 29th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would amend the general statute to provide protection to any students or employees of institutions of higher education for reporting or disclosing having been a victim of sexual assault, stalking, or intimate partner violence. This legislation is to ensure victims of sexual assault, stalking, or intimate partner violence do not endure additional injury or harassment for their report, disclosure, participation, or testimony. The purpose of this bill is to create a safer campus environment in which gender-based harassment is not tolerated and there are streamlined avenues for victims of violence or harassment to seek justice by filing a confidential complaint.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language eliminates criminal immunity and clarifies that the victim must report or disclose the alleged incident to the higher education institution.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[University of Connecticut, Interim Title IX Coordinator, Sarah Chipman:](#) Ms. Chipman submitted testimony in support of this bill because of its intent to protect participants in

University Title IX proceedings from retaliation. As of now the University of Connecticut has policies in place to protect individuals who make good faith reports or participate in proceedings, but that this bill would bolster and expand protections.

[Vice President of Government & Public Relations at Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Liza Andrews](#): Ms. Andrews provided testimony in support of this bill stating that research demonstrates it is rare for individuals to report their experiences with gender-based violence because of the difficulty and doubt they face as a result of reporting. She stated that survivors fear retaliation, ridicule, and isolation for reporting because they have seen how those before them have been treated as a result of their reports. She fears if victims of gender-based violence choose not to disclose, it makes the campus environment less safe. Ms. Andrews believes that should this bill pass, though, students will feel less inhibited to report crimes of sexual assault, stalking, or intimate partner violence.

[Executive Director-Alliance to End Sexual Violence, Beth Hamilton](#): Ms. Hamilton submitted testimony in support of this bill because she believes this bill has the potential to mitigate some of the challenges survivors of sexual violence face for reporting. Survivors fear retaliation, lack of institutional support, and complex, prolonged Title IX cases for filing a good-faith report. She stated the fear and looming threat of retaliation discourages many survivors from reporting, allowing those who have caused harm to avoid accountability and fostering a culture of silence around sexual violence. Ms. Hamilton believes that should this bill pass, it would encourage survivors to come forward, creating a safer and more just system for students and faculty alike on campus.

[Michelle Noehren](#): Ms. Noehren provided testimony in support of this bill because as she described, victims are often silenced out of fear of retaliation and disciplinary action, preventing them from getting help or pursuing an investigation and legal action. She believes this bill ensures that survivors can come forward without added risk or personal or academic consequences, creating a safer campus environment.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

[Stephen Mendelsohn](#): Mr. Mendelsohn provided testimony in opposition of this bill, stating this law provides blanket immunity to any student or employee of an institution of higher education who reports and provides testimony regarding sexual assault, stalking, or intimate partner violence. It is stated that this bill could provide a deeply problematic incentive for questionable and unprovable accusations to cover up serious crimes and misconduct. He described cases which people reported false allegations. He stated that if both a man and a woman hook up and they are equally intoxicated, they should both be held accountable, not just the man. It is stated that Title IX was intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education but instead is used to foster such discrimination. Mr. Mendelsohn suggested that SB 977 should eliminate the provision “no bad faith or malicious purpose” and the current “preponderance” standard as mandated by P.A. 14-11 to ensure both sides are held to the same standard. He stated SB 997 should be rejected as it is a miscarriage of justice and perversely incentivizes false accusations.

Reported by: Lucy Sheldon

Date: 3/28/2025