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**Testimony of
 The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
 Submitted to the
 Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee
 March 12, 2015**

**Re: S.B. 966, An Act Concerning Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners at
 Institutions of Higher Education**

Senators Bartolomeo and Witkos, Representatives Willis and Betts, and distinguished members of the Judiciary committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in support of S.B. 966, An Act Concerning Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners at Institutions of Higher Education.

Nearly one in five female students will be the victim of sexual assault while attending an institution of higher education.¹ In the last year, there has been a great deal of attention on campus sexual assault, both at the federal and state level. Connecticut lawmakers, championed by this committee's leadership, passed landmark legislation in 2014 that seeks to both address and prevent sexual violence on campuses throughout Connecticut. As greater attention and supports become available, ideally more victims of sexual assault will seek support and report the assault.

S.B. 966 seeks to expand Connecticut's sexual assault forensic examiner (SAFE) program to college campuses. The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women worked closely on efforts to establish the state's pilot SAFE program. Sexual assault forensic examiners provide immediate care and treatment to victims of sexual assault at health care facilities including the sexual assault forensic exam. Currently, when a student is sexually assaulted and they seek medical care on their campus, they must go off campus to receive a forensic exam. S.B. 966 would allow a student to seek the care they need on campus.

The PCSW supports all efforts to ensure that victims of sexual assault receive the services they need in a supportive and timely manner. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this important issue.

¹ The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010.