

Judiciary Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-89 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT UPDATING PRISON RAPE ELIMINATION STANDARDS.

Vote Date: 3/23/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/4/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Request of the Governor Pursuant to Joint Rule 9

CO-SPONSORS:

Rep. Eleni Kavros DeGraw, 17th Dist.

Rep. Travis Simms, 140th Dist.

Rep. Sarah Keitt, 134th Dist.'

Sen. Julie Kushner, 24th Dist.

Rep. Hubert D. Delany, 144th Dist.

Rep. Laurie Sweet, 91st Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

The purpose of this bill is to strengthen Connecticut's implementation of the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) by codifying its standards in state law. Currently, existing protections against sexual abuse in corrections facilities are largely reliant on federal requirements; these could be weakened if federal enforcement becomes less consistent or stringent. This bill seeks to address concerns about oversight and accountability by clarifying reporting requirements, strengthening investigative procedures, and expanding the role of the Office of the Correction Ombuds. It would also correct inconsistencies in staff training and institutional practices related to the prevention and response to sexual abuse in corrections facilities.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute language clarifies in lines 3 and 64 that "any agency" refers to "any executive branch" agency.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Ned Lamont, Governor of Connecticut: Governor Lamont supports this legislation because it strengthens Connecticut's implementation of the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act. He emphasizes that stronger state-level enforcement is necessary to effectively prevent and address sexual abuse in corrections facilities. The bill would clarify reporting requirements, require independent investigations, establish staff training standards, and provide protections and support services for incarcerated survivors. Governor Lamont states that these updates will strengthen oversight, improve safety within facilities, and affirm the state's responsibility to protect vulnerable individuals in its custody.

Judicial Branch, External Affairs Division: The Judicial Branch expresses concerns about the language of the bill, as it does not define "agency" as referring specifically to an Executive Branch agency. They note this provision makes the bill indistinguishable from existing laws. The Branch does, however, take seriously its responsibilities under the Prison Rape Elimination Act and consider this an appropriate opportunity to clarify definitions under law.

Angel Quiros, Commissioner, CT Department of Correction: Angel Quiros supports this legislation because it protects against any weakening of federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards. He notes that the bill would expand notification and transparency requirements to improve safety and security in corrections facilities. He also highlights the Department's existing PREA compliance efforts: these include dedicated oversight, staff training, independent audits, and multiple reporting avenues for incarcerated individuals.

DeVaughn L. Ward Esq., Correction Ombuds, State of Connecticut: DeVaughn Ward supports this legislation because codifying Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards is necessary to ensure continued protections against sexual abuse in custody. He notes this is particularly important as federal support for PREA implementation has weakened. Statutory codification will strengthen oversight, transparency, and accountability within corrections facilities. He urges the Committee to consider amendments creating a limited statutory cause of action allowing survivors of custodial sexual abuse to bring claims directly in court, and to strengthen corrective-action requirements when PREA violations are identified.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Alyssa D'Amato, Program Director, YWCA New Britain Sexual Assault Crisis Service: Alyssa D'Amato supports this legislation because it would codify the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) into Connecticut law. This would strengthen oversight, accountability, and access to survivor-centered services in corrections facilities. She notes that people in custody are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and often face barriers when seeking support, including limited and monitored communication. Establishing PREA standards in state law would help close gaps in reporting and investigations while improving safety and institutional culture within corrections facilities.

William Bentley: William Bentley supports this legislation because expanding affordable housing through the Yes In God's Backyard (YIGBY) initiative will promote economic development, social equity, and community stability. Access to affordable housing improves economic outcomes, reduces reliance on social support systems, and helps address

persistent poverty in Connecticut. He urges the legislature to allow faith institutions to contribute to affordable housing solutions.

Peter Doucette: Peter Doucette supports this legislation because it would codify protections for incarcerated individuals, who are already marginalized and vulnerable in society. He argues that establishing these protections in law will help ensure accountability and provide recourse for people in custody who experience harm.

Tyanna Evans, MSW Student, Southern Connecticut State University: Tyanna Evans supports this legislation because it will strengthen protections against sexual abuse in corrections facilities and ensure greater accountability for such misconduct. She argues that incarcerated individuals are often marginalized, and their experiences of sexual violence overlooked. The bill affirms their dignity, safety, and basic human rights.

Marisol Garcia, Executive Director, Prison2Public Policy: Marisol Garcia conditionally supports this legislation because it includes gaps that risk undermining its effectiveness. She argues it must be strengthened adopting person-first language, placing limits on cross-gender supervision in intimate settings, and creating a mechanism to review past allegations of sexual abuse in custody. These changes would ensure the law is fully trauma-informed and survivor-centered. She does, however, appreciate how the legislation expands oversight and reporting requirements related to sexual abuse in corrections facilities.

Kate Hickie, MSW Student, UConn School of Social Work: Kate Hickie supports this legislation because it would require state agencies responsible for incarceration to comply with federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards and strengthen oversight of sexual abuse in corrections facilities. She argues that codifying these standards in state law would improve accountability by requiring reporting of sexual assault complaints, investigations, and staff training. This would also help address systemic failures to properly respond to abuse in custody.

Lindsey Jones, Volunteer Program Manager, YWCA New Britain Sexual Assault Crisis Service: Lindsey Jones supports this legislation because she believes codifying the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) into Connecticut law would strengthen accountability, oversight, and access to services for survivors of sexual violence in corrections facilities. Emphasizing her experience working with incarcerated survivors, she argues that current PREA protections are difficult to enforce and that survivors often face barriers to reporting abuse and receiving confidential support. Establishing clear, consistent standards in state law would help ensure survivors have a meaningful pathway to justice and trauma-informed care.

Anne Malisk, Director of Sexual Assault Services, Women and Families Center: Anne Malisk supports this legislation because codifying the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) into Connecticut law would strengthen accountability, oversight, and access to services for survivors of sexual abuse in corrections facilities. Incarcerated survivors often face barriers to reporting abuse and obtaining support. She emphasizes that establishing clear, enforceable standards in state law would improve consistency in reporting and investigations, as well as access to advocacy, medical care, and mental health services.

Cathy Osten, State Senator, 19th District: Senator Cathy Osten supports this legislation because updating Connecticut law to align with the Prison Rape Elimination Act would strengthen accountability, transparency, and protections against sexual abuse in corrections

facilities. She argues that codifying Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards into state law will help ensure consistent oversight and safeguard vulnerable individuals in custody, even if federal policies change.

Rodney Whitaker: Rodney Whitaker supports this legislation because any unwanted sexual contact in corrections settings is inappropriate and that protections should apply regardless of the genders involved. He argues that individuals in custody should be protected from conduct that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Alex Brown, MSW Student, UConn School of Social Work: Alex Brown conditionally supports this legislation because it needs to be strengthened to address structural issues that allow abuse to occur. Speaking from personal experience as a survivor of sexual abuse while incarcerated, she urges the Committee to adopt person-first language. This would address cross-gender supervision in intimate settings and ensure accountability mechanisms that allow survivors meaningful access to justice. She does, however, express an appreciation of how the bill improves oversight related to sexual abuse in corrections facilities.

Alexander Combs: Alexander (Alexis) Combs supports this legislation because stronger accountability, better staff training, and meaningful consequences for misconduct are necessary to prevent abuse. He draws on personal experience to emphasize the importance of ensuring incarcerated individuals are treated with dignity and respect. As a transgender man incarcerated at York Correctional Institution (a women's corrections facility), Combs describes repeated verbal harassment, threats, and incidents of sexual misconduct by staff that he believes were not properly addressed.

Ashley Dunn, President and CEO, The Center for Empowerment and Education: Ashley Dunn supports this legislation because codifying the Prison Rape Elimination Act into Connecticut law would make protections against sexual abuse in corrections facilities enforceable, consistent, and subject to clearer oversight. She argues that establishing Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards in state statute would improve reporting requirements, strengthen accountability and transparency. These steps would also ensure incarcerated survivors have timely access to advocacy, medical care, and other support services.

Beth Hamilton, Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence: Beth Hamilton supports this legislation because codifying the Prison Rape Elimination Act into Connecticut law would make protections against sexual abuse in custody enforceable and consistent across facilities. She notes this would strengthen oversight, transparency, and reporting requirements while ensuring incarcerated survivors have access to advocacy, medical care, and other support services.

Rahmia Johnson: Rahmia Johnson supports this legislation because it would align Connecticut law with current federal Prison Rape Elimination Act standards and strengthen protections against sexual abuse in corrections facilities. She argues that the bill promotes accountability and transparency through reporting requirements and independent oversight. It would also ensure incarcerated individuals retain their right to safety, dignity, and access to medical, mental health, and advocacy services.

YWCA Greenwich: YWCA Greenwich supports this legislation because it would strengthen efforts to prevent and address sexual abuse in corrections facilities by codifying the Prison

Rape Elimination Act into Connecticut law. They contend that the bill promotes transparency and accountability through staff training, reporting requirements, and oversight by the Office of the Correction Ombuds. It would also improve protections for incarcerated survivors of sexual violence.

Jett Moxley, Assistant Director, Sexual Assault Crisis Service, YWCA New Britain: Jett Moxley supports this legislation because codifying the Prison Rape Elimination Act into Connecticut law would create enforceable reporting requirements, oversight, and accountability for sexual abuse in corrections facilities. Having worked with a sexual assault crisis hotline that receives calls from incarcerated individuals, she argues that survivors are often misdirected on how to report abuse and lack meaningful avenues for protection or investigation. Additionally, changes to state law would help close gaps in reporting, investigations, and access to survivor-centered services.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): Jess Zaccagnino supports this legislation because codifying the Prison Rape Elimination Act into Connecticut law would make protections against sexual abuse in custody enforceable and consistent. She contends the bill would strengthen oversight and transparency through reporting requirements and review by the Office of the Correction Ombuds, while helping ensure incarcerated individuals are protected from sexual violence and have clearer rights and remedies.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Alexander Taubes, Counsel for Ms. Lashanda Gregory: Alexander Taubes opposes this legislation in its current form because it creates oversight and compliance requirements without meaningful enforcement or accountability. Testifying on behalf of Lashanda Gregory, he contends the bill lacks a direct cause of action allowing survivors of custodial sexual abuse to sue the state in court; therefore, it fails to remove structural barriers to justice. He urges the committee to amend or replace the bill to include enforceable remedies for survivors, such as **a direct cause of action allowing survivors of custodial sexual abuse to bring civil claims against the state in Superior Court without first obtaining permission from the Claims Commissioner.**

Anne Lee, M.D.: Anne Lee opposes this legislation because codifying Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards is insufficient without meaningful enforcement mechanisms. Drawing on her experience volunteering in corrections facilities and her work in social work policy, she urges the bill to be strengthened with provisions such as a direct cause of action for survivors, removal of Claims Commissioner approval requirements, independent oversight and reporting, limits on cross-gender supervision in intimate settings, and the use of person-first language.

Reported by: Justin Lamoureux

Date: March 25, 2026