

Testimony in Support of SB 762
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Submitted by: Amy Davidson, Crime Survivors Program Director
March 1, 2017

Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

On behalf of Partnership for Safety and Justice (PSJ), I offer you my testimony in support of SB 762. The bill offers protection from arrest or prosecution to victims of sexual assault under the age of 21 in cases where they are found to have purchased or possessed alcohol, then later sought assistance from law enforcement or emergency medical services in response to the assault.

PSJ seeks to advance solutions to crime that ensure justice, equity, accountability, and healing to achieve safe and strong communities. We know that those most vulnerable to sexual assault are adolescent women. More than half of all sexual assaults perpetrated in the U.S. will be against women ages 16-21.¹ We also know that 1 in 6 boys will be sexually assaulted by the age of 18.

Increasingly, professionals across disciplines are recognizing the barriers that victims face in reporting sexual assaults to law enforcement. We know that the vast majority of these assaults were facilitated by alcohol, but never reported.² For the person who commits a sexual assault against an intoxicated minor, alcohol is not only a means to commit the crime, but also a way to later discredit the victim. Punishing any victim of sexual assault for any part of their victimization serves only to increase the harm of the crime and the likelihood that sexual assaults will go unreported.

Punishing underage victims of violent crimes for possession of alcohol is contrary to their and the public's right to safety and accountability. It is also a missed opportunity for early intervention with those causing harm, and preventing future harm.

It's time we stop sending the same antiquated message that victims are to blame for sexual assault. By voting in support of SB 762, you have an opportunity to send a different message to victims of sexual violence; a message that crime victims can safely report sexual assault and that the person or people who committed the crime will be held appropriately accountable.

Respectfully,

Amy Davidson, Crime Survivor Program Director

¹ Randall, Melanie and Haskell, Lori. 1995. "Sexual Violence in Women's Safety Project, A Community-Based Survey," Violence Against Women 1 (1): 6-31.

² Finkelhor, David, et al. "Sexual Abuse in a National Survey of Adult Men and Women: Prevalence, Characteristics and Risk Factors," Child Abuse and Neglect, 1990.