



FREEDOM FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 1, 2018

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## **COLORADO SENATE LEADERSHIP REFUSE BIPARTISAN BILL TO PROTECT SURVIVORS OF CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT**

*From State House to school house Senate leadership continues to defend practices, policies, and systems that perpetuate sexual misconduct*

DENVER – Colorado Coalition against Sexual Assault’s (CCASA) priority legislation, House Bill 18-1391 “Sexual Misconduct in Higher Education,” was killed in Senate Appropriations this morning on a party line vote. In the past year, it has become glaringly obvious that Colorado Senate Leadership is unwilling to address sexual misconduct in any form, from the State House to the school house. CCASA denounces the Senate Leadership’s decision today that made sexual assault a partisan issue. We re-affirm our belief that sexual violence is an issue that impacts each and every corner of our community—regardless of party affiliation.

As the bill passed through the Senate Judiciary Committee, Committee Chair Senator Bob Gardner introduced and the Committee added devastating amendments that would have harmed victims across the state. Raana Simmons, CCASA’s Director of Policy, stated, “The Senate Judiciary Committee gutted the heart and soul of this bill to do the exact opposite of what stakeholders intended and agreed upon—they would have created sex discrimination within a bill designed to prevent it by effectively codifying victim-blaming and creating barriers to access fairness and support services for survivors.”

Initially, when introduced in the Colorado House of Representatives, HB18-1391 yielded support from a diverse group of stakeholders, including Colorado victim advocacy groups and Colorado Institutions of Higher Education. A group of current students enrolled at a Colorado Institution of Higher Education wrote to their campus newspaper, “this bill supports all of us in our ultimate mission: accessing an enriching, violence-free education.”

The addition of harmful amendments added by the Senate Judiciary essentially demonstrated a lack of interest in ensuring the safety of Colorado’s students. Because stakeholders, including CCASA, were absolutely unwilling to accept such egregious proposals, Senate leadership unnecessarily sent this bill to the Appropriations Committee. In doing so, they ultimately controlled the outcome before allowing a full Senate vote, where the bill would have likely received bipartisan support.

CCASA is committed to championing the rights of survivors across the aisle so that sexual violence is treated as the bipartisan issue that it is. Thank you to all the bill sponsors—Speaker Crisanta Duran, Representative Faith Winter, Senator Beth Martinez-Humenik, and Senator Andy Kerr—and Colorado Institutions of Higher Education who kept this core value central to HB18-1391.

**CCASA Interviews are available upon request**

<https://duclarion.com/2018/04/lte-support-the-new-bill-that-protects-universities-from-gender-and-sexual-violence/>