

Written Testimony in Favor (FAV) of SB 758

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I am a Bystander Intervention Trainer (BIT) at Johns Hopkins University. Although I do not represent the university or the BIT program's views on this bill, being a part of this program has shaped so much of what I understand about consent. At BIT, instead of saying "no means no" we emphasize the saying, "yes means yes." If someone is mature enough to have sex, they are also mature enough to obtain consent, or in other words, a "yes."

But "yes means yes" is not just a slogan; it's a fundamental concept that fosters mutual respect and understanding. I like to think that this bill codifies "yes means yes." It tells everyone participating in sexual encounters that consent is non-negotiable. Consent must be **actively** sought out by both parties in **every** sexual encounter. By emphasizing clear and voluntary agreement in sexual encounters, **regardless of gender**, we create a safer environment for all individuals to navigate intimate relationships. It acknowledges the inherent dignity and autonomy of every person, affirming their right to freely express their desires and boundaries.

Moreover, by explicitly stating that consent cannot be inferred from clothing, prior relationships, or coercion, the bill sends a powerful message that consent is something that cannot be accidentally given. Consent is purposeful and affirmative, not allusive and implied. Without this bill, non-consensual sex—otherwise known as rape—is legally permissible. **I urge my representatives to report favorably on Senate Bill 758.**