



House Committee on Higher Education
Testimony of the Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition
In Support of Senate Bill 800
May 13, 2025

The **Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition (TWHC)** is grateful for this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of **Senate Bill 800** by Senator Judith Zaffirini. This bill addresses the sexual violence prevention orientation course that public universities must provide to incoming freshmen and university transfers. SB 800 would require universities to include a video in this course that shares basic information on the university's Title IX office, including an overview of the services provided by the office, names of the university's Title IX coordinators and deputy coordinators, and office location and contact information.

TWHC is a group of 77 healthcare, faith, and community-based member organizations dedicated to improving the health and well-being of Texas women, babies, and families by ensuring access to preventive healthcare for all Texas women. Access to preventive and preconception care – including health screenings and contraception – means healthy, planned pregnancies and the early detection of cancers and other treatable conditions.

TWHC believes that sexual violence and intimate partner violence are significant women's health issues. In alignment with our mission, we wish to reiterate our **support for SB 800, as it would help survivors access reporting and support services at universities across the state**. SB 800 keeps not only Texas university students safe and healthy, but also the families they live with.

Unfortunately, acts of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking are incredibly common across Texas.

According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, 18,307 offenses falling under the sexual assault umbrella occurred statewide in 2023. These include incidents with associated charges of sexual abuse, indecency, sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, and more. The majority (27.4%) of all victims involved were between the ages of 15 and 19. Additionally, 247,896 offenses falling under the family violence umbrella occurred statewide in 2023. These include incidents with associated charges of murder and manslaughter, rape, assault, kidnapping, and more.¹ These are traumatic, life-altering encounters. Many of which are committed by someone the victims know, and can end with a tragic death. The Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) found that 205 Texans were killed by a current or former intimate partner in 2023.²

¹ 2023 Crime in Texas Annual Report, Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), 2023.

² Honoring Texas Victims Report 2023, Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV), 2023.



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Current data also shows that intimate partner violence is a significant factor in maternal mortality. In its most recent biennial report, the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee found violence, including intimate partner violence, to be a significant contributor to maternal deaths across the state, and partners were most likely to be perpetrators of perinatal homicide.³ Violent pregnancy-related deaths with a manner of death of suicide or homicide represented 27% of pregnancy-related deaths in Texas in 2022.⁴

Texas university students are at an increased risk of experiencing sexual violence and intimate partner violence. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), 13% of all undergraduate and graduate students will experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation nationwide. And 5.8% of students have experienced stalking since entering college.⁵ Research has found that 50% of campus sexual assaults occur during a period known as the Red Zone - the beginning period of a new academic year (from mid-August to November), when incoming freshmen and new transfer students are entering the university community. College women in their first year have reportedly been at the highest risk for sexual assault compared to other college women after their first year, including drug-and-alcohol facilitated sexual assault as well as attempted or completed forcible rape. However, data consistently shows that the majority of students on university campuses choose not to report their experiences of sexual assault. It is estimated that 90% of assaults on campuses are not reported.⁶

There is a clear need for the explicit dissemination of campus-specific resources for students who experience sexual assault, either on campus or before arrival. All public Texas universities must do this on some level through their Title IX offices. However, current outreach efforts are not enough.

SB 800 addresses this problem by requiring basic information on university Title IX resources to be shared with incoming freshmen and transfer students in a clear, concise video format. By giving students an easy way to access sexual violence reporting and support services, there is a greater chance that they can treat the physical or mental health conditions that appear in the aftermath of these unfortunate incidents. There is also a greater chance they won't experience these types of violence again in the future.

³ Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report 2024, Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), 1 Sept. 2024.

⁴ Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report 2022, Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Dec. 2022.

⁵ Campus Sexual Violence: Statistics, Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN).

⁶ Miodus, Stephanie, et al. Campus Sexual Assault: Fact Sheet from an Intersectional Lens, American Psychological Association, June 2023.



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TWHC is eager to help with these issues, and we are happy to provide any additional information on this topic.

Respectfully,
Rachel Wolleben
Policy and Advocacy Coordinator
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