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Gobi and Roy Hold First Hearing for The Joint Committee on Higher Education

BOSTON- Senator Anne M Gobi (D-Spencer) was proud to join **Representative Jeffery Roy (D-Franklin)** on Tuesday, April 9th, in chairing the first hearing for the Joint Committee on Higher Education. Dozens of college students, faculty, and recent alumni were in attendance to testify and demand urgent action on bills aimed at providing information on the prevalence of sexual violence on college campuses and ways to support survivors.

Among the bills heard that day was one (H.1209/S.764) creating a task force to develop a sexual assault climate survey, requiring colleges and universities to conduct the survey every two years and publicly post a summary of the results. A second piece of legislation heard (H.1209/S.764) would require higher education institutions to create and communicate policies on sexual and gender-based violence, mandate prevention training for students, and establishes a “confidential resource advisor” to provide information to both survivors and students accused of assault.

When asked for comment on the hearing Senator Gobi had this to say: "The heart wrenching testimony from young people whose dream of going to the college of their choice turned into a nightmare when they were victims of sexual assault. I am glad to work with them and my colleagues to get a bill passed that will hopefully make our campuses safer places we can all be proud of."

“The hearing highlighted some important issues with safety and security in the higher education arena, and the lifelong consequences that students face when traumatized by sexual assault,” said Representative Roy. “The testimony was compelling and underscored that these are very difficult and sensitive topics. I am grateful that so many people shared their stories and I look forward to working with my colleagues to address these concerns and make our campuses safe and inviting spaces.”

Like other bills scheduled for early hearings this year, campus sexual violence is an area lawmakers acted on last session, but did not get a final bill to the governor. The House and the Senate passed different versions of a climate survey bill last summer, with the Senate amending its bill to also include provisions from the broader campus assault bill. The two versions were never reconciled before the end of last session.

Both bills this session -- the climate survey bill, filed by Rep. Lori Ehrlich and Sen. William Brownsberger, and the campus sexual violence bill, filed by Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier and Sen. Michael Moore -- are backed by more than half of the 200-member state Legislature, according to the Every Voice Coalition, and several legislators were on hand to deliver their own impassioned remarks in support of the bills.

For more information on the hearing, please contact Senator Gobi's office at (617) 722-1540.

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