

From: Erin O'Callaghan
Sent: Wed, 9 Jun 2021 13:34:25 -0500
To: T9PublicHearing
Subject: public written comment around Title IX

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Hello,

My name is Erin O'Callaghan. I am a 26 year old PhD candidate and sexual violence scholar at the University of Illinois-Chicago. I am also a campus sexual assault survivor, both as an undergraduate student and as a graduate worker. I have been through two Title IX processes. Both were traumatic, terrible, and did not protect me or contribute to my healing from sexual violence. If anything, they not only exacerbated my trauma from experiencing sexual violence, but created new trauma because of how terrible the processes were. What made my experiences worse and barred me from seeking help, however, is mandatory reporting policy. Mandatory reporting on college campuses should be abolished.

Mandatory reporting kept me from talking to anyone informally about my assaults, particularly when I was assaulted as a graduate worker. I had two options: shut up about my professor sexually assaulting me and continue working with him for five or more years, or go to Title IX. I couldn't talk to my advisor about what I had experienced. I couldn't talk in my classes or about my personal experiences with sexual violence, even though I am a sexual assault researcher, because of mandatory reporting. I was strong-armed into pursuing a Title IX investigation because I was given an impossible choice. And that impossible choice led me through a process I didn't want to take part in, and a process that has traumatized me more so than my sexual assault experience. Removing mandatory reporting would allow survivors more autonomy over who they choose to talk about their experience with and allow them to get more informal support, which we know from the research is vital to their recovery and vital to them seeking more formal help. Mandatory reporting must be abolished-anything less is a failure of this administration to take survivor's concerns seriously.

Sincerely,

Erin O'Callaghan, M.A. (she, her, hers)

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