



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

**EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION**

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**Testimony of Stephen N. Ment  
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing  
March 10, 2006**

**House Bill 5543, An Act Concerning Victim Services**

Good morning. My name is Stephen Ment and I am here to testify on behalf of the Judicial Branch in support of *House Bill 5543, An Act Concerning Victim Services*. This bill, which is part of the Judicial Branch's legislative package, would stream-line the process for making a contribution to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF), and would reduce the minimum loss required for compensation claims made by crime victims to twenty-five dollars.

Sections one through three of the bill would allow a defendant making a contribution to the CICF, pursuant to C.G.S. § 54-56h, to make payment to the clerk of the court where the matter is pending. As you may know, C.G.S. §54-56h permits the court or the state's attorney to consider a defendant's contribution to the CICF in the disposition of a criminal or motor vehicle case.

Currently, all contributions must be made directly to the Office of Victim Services - which has one location - in Plainville, Connecticut. The defendant must travel to Plainville or send the contribution by mail, obtain a receipt, and then return to court with the proof of payment. Allowing the clerk of the court to accept the contribution - as they currently do with fees and fines - will stream-line the entire process. A defendant will be able to make the contribution and have his matter resolved in a more timely fashion.

Furthermore, we expect that this change would increase the amount of money deposited into the fund; currently, some prosecutors are reluctant to order contributions

to the CICF because of the delay incurred by waiting for a defendant to return to court with a receipt. If the bill passes, the entire transaction would be capable of being completed within the courthouse. We believe that this will lead to increased reliance on C.G.S. § 54-56h.

Sections four and five of the bill would eliminate the current \$100 deductible for compensation claims made by crime victims, and replace it with a minimum loss requirement of \$25. The crime victim compensation program was created to reduce a victim's financial hardship created by crime. For some victims, out-of-pocket losses do not exceed \$100; in these instances, the program cannot be of assistance. Lowering the minimum loss requirement to \$25 would allow more victims of crime to avail themselves of the compensation program and thus ensure that these individuals do not suffer an economic loss as a result of being a crime victim. Please note that enactment of these sections will not require an additional appropriation to the Judicial Branch, as the CICF can absorb the additional pay-outs that would be necessary.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.