

Testimony of Aldwin Allen
April 4, 2007
Judiciary Committee
In Favor of H.B. 6285

One night in February of 2006, the relative peace of my street was shattered by gun shots and not for the first time. Unfortunately this is too common an occurrence in my neighborhood. What makes this night stand out in my mind is how close these shots were. When I went outside I saw a man shot, and three vehicles riddled with bullet holes, one of which was my truck, which was parked in my driveway. I tell you this in hope that you will understand how personal this issue is for me and my family. I have chosen to stay in my neighborhood because I believe we all have a responsibility to the greater community. I believe in this so strongly that even after an ordeal such as this and many other traumatic instances in my neighborhood, I choose to stay.

I have stayed up late at night watching as drug dealers degrade my neighborhood. I have not stood idly by as this happened. I have worked with police to fight the plague of drugs and violence in my neighborhood. I have watched as a generation of 16 and 17 year olds are arrested and processed through the adult system. Too often, because they are so young in the adult system and their crimes are so relatively minor, they are given a slap on the wrist and sent back out more emboldened. When they are incarcerated at that age they just come back to the community as hardened criminals.

Before these youth entered the adult system they would at least exchange pleasantries with me as I passed them on the street. After they returned most take on guarded and sometime hostile demeanor. One went as far as to threaten to shoot me. The adult system punishes but does not treat; it removes marginal children from my community but does not teach them how to be a part of it when they come back. These youth have to be held accountable, taught that they are part of the community and cannot prey upon it. This is not easy with a school system where 70% of the 9th graders will not graduate. This young people have to be given the chance to develop skills so that they have options when they re-enter the community. Our youth have to be given hope that they do have a future and that they can succeed.

According to DCF and CSSD, the Joint Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan for Connecticut is to:

“ collaboratively promote and administer prevention, justice, and effective treatment in a fair, timely, and appropriate manner with dignity and respect for the individual needs of children, youth, and families”.

This is the right system and philosophy for the youth I see and know in my neighborhood. I need to live in a community that will be safe for my children. Today, I ask you will return these young people to the juvenile system and give me hope for that safer community for my family, because putting these youth in the adult system takes all hope away.