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**Proposed Bill No. 1458 – AAC Jessica’s Law**  
**Senator Dan Debicella Testimony**  
**April 4, 2007**

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to share with you the reasons for my very strong support for SB 1458, An Act Concerning Jessica’s Law. My apologies that I cannot be there in person to testify today because of previous commitments.

Like all of you, and every other responsible human being, I abhor the very idea that there are people in the world who could sexually assault adults, never mind children. Yet, rarely does a day go by when the horrifying details of what some people are capable of doing to children is graphically laid out for all to see. Shockingly, these details all too often include mention of the fact that the perpetrators are not strangers to these types of violent crimes against children.

How can we as lawmakers, as responsible members of society, and as decent human beings fail to take the strongest action possible to discourage this type of heinous behavior and, failing that, to harshly punish it? I believe that passing this bill would put everyone on notice - from potential criminals to potential victims - that Connecticut citizens do not tolerate the sexual assault and sexual abuse of children and that they stand ready to take the strongest action possible against these criminals. Decent human beings know that there is no acceptable excuse for this type of criminal behavior. Connecticut citizens want our law enforcement and judicial systems to have the necessary authority to act in a manner that reflects our belief that there is no excuse for sexually assaulting and sexually abusing children.

I believe that SB 1458 should be passed for several reasons—first, it should serve to protect our children by removing pedophiles from society. Second, it is fair to have the penalty fit the heinous nature of the crime. Third, I believe that it will be more effective than plea bargaining in taking dangerous pedophiles off the streets.

- *Protecting Our Children.* Connecticut needs a law on the books that takes these criminals off the streets for a very, very, long time. Even if the risk of spending a significant portion of one's life behind bars is not enough to deter all sexual predators from making children their victims, society can at least prevent convicted pedophiles from creating new victims by imposing lengthy prison sentences.
- *Fairness and Justice.* Connecticut needs a law on the books that imposes punishment that fits the crime. Pedophiles bring terror into the lives of innocent children. That terror, that horror and that loss of innocence can last a lifetime. As citizens of a just society, we have the obligation to impose a punishment that reflects our understanding of what was taken from these young victims. Twenty-five years, or more, in prison is not too much to demand of sexual predators.
- *More Effective Than Current Plea Bargains.* The only argument I have heard to date against Jessica's Law is that it will hamper the ability of prosecutors to enter plea bargains with alleged pedophiles. Opponents say that more pedophiles will get off because it is harder to convict a pedophile than to simply plea bargain a light sentence. I believe this argument has a critical faulty assumption—that these plea bargains actually accomplish anything to protect our children or ensure justice.

Law abiding, responsible, citizens have little to no patience for a legal system that routinely enters into plea bargains with criminals who sexually assault and sexually abuse children. They are correct to be dissatisfied with prison sentences of only a few years, with time off for good behavior. Such plea bargains are not fair or just to the victims—try explaining to the past and future victims of child sexual predators that a two year plea bargain is fair. Additionally, such plea bargains do little to protect children from pedophiles striking again if they are simply being rotated out of prison every few years. I believe that mandatory minimum sentences of 25 years for the first offense and 50 years for the second offense are more in line with justice for the victims and more likely to protect our children.

Thank you for considering this legislation, and I urge the Judiciary Committee to pass this onto the full Senate and House for debate and final action.