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Testimony of Senate Republican Leader Louis C. DeLuca
before the Connecticut General Assembly's Judiciary Committee

April 4, 2007

Chairmen MacDonald and Lawlor, ranking members Kissel and O'Neill, and members of the Judiciary Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of S.B. 1458, AN ACT CONCERNING JESSICA'S LAW.

Sexual assault of a child is a heinous crime that warrants severe punishment. For the past two years, the Senate Republican Caucus has led efforts to pass Jessica's Law for Connecticut – legislation that will better protect our children by keeping child predators in jail and out of our neighborhoods.

After the Governor's proposal of a similar law was met with widespread opposition, Sen. Kissel met with the Chief State's Attorney and attempted to address his objections and reach a workable compromise. SB 1458 is the proposed compromise.

The original Jessica's Law was passed in Florida in response to the kidnapping and murder of nine year old Jessica Lunsford by a released pedophile. Her killer had previously broken into a home and kidnapped and raped a young girl. For that crime, he served less than two years in jail. Had he stolen the silverware from the home instead of the youngster, he would have faced a longer prison sentence. He was on probation for that crime, and in violation of that probation, when he broke into the Lunsford home.

Jessica was abducted from her bedroom, raped and buried alive. She was found dead three-weeks later, wrapped in black plastic garbage bags, her hands clutching a toy stuffed dolphin.

Jessica's tragic death prompted 39 states to enact sentencing laws similar to what we are proposing for Connecticut, but opponents of mandatory minimum sentencing of any kind have held our state back for two years. We must not stall anymore.

This bill will put predators where they belong – behind bars where they can do no harm to our children. It will take those who prey on children and keep them off our streets for twenty-five years the first time they abuse a child. If they do it again, they will spend the next fifty years in jail. And our state, and our children, will be safer for it.

Constant pressure from the Senate Republican caucus forced the passage of a compromise bill in the Senate last year, but regrettably the legislation stalled in the House and session adjourned before the measure was ever brought up for a vote.

The Senate Republican Caucus will continue to do everything we can to help pass this legislation in 2007. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

Sincerely,

Louis C. DeLuca
Senate Republican Leader