



State of Connecticut

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**Testimony of Deborah Del Prete Sullivan,
Legal Counsel/Executive Assistant Public Defender
Office of Chief Public Defender**

Raised Bill No. 5916 -

**An Act Concerning Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements on Legislation and
Certain Offenses Committed Near Schools or Child Day Care Centers
Public Hearing - March 12, 2008**

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports this proposed legislation. The bill as drafted would require the inclusion of a racial and ethnic impact statement on any file copy of a bill or resolution that receives a joint favorable vote by a committee. By analyzing the impact of criminal justice reforms, including enhanced and minimum mandatory sentences, prior to passage of proposed legislation, unintended consequences may be avoided. One such unintended consequence is the racial and ethnic disparity among persons incarcerated.

In an attempt to reduce the disparity, this legislation also proposes reducing from 1500 feet to 500 feet the distance from which a person charged with a violation of 21a-267 must be within to qualify for an enhanced penalty. This is especially important for those persons living in urban areas where the 1500 foot perimeter more often than not encompasses a school or schools. Reducing the distance does not eliminate a sentence for violation of the underlying statute, but it does reduce the likelihood that the enhanced penalty can be used discriminatorily to compel people so charged to accept plea bargains for felony convictions.