



NCDC

National Center for DWI Courts

Making your community a safer place

March 11, 2009

Connecticut State Legislature
General Assembly Judiciary Committee

Dear Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is David Wallace and I am the director for the National Center for DWI (Driving While Impaired) Courts (NCDC). **I am writing to express my support of SB 660, an Act Requiring Drunken Drivers to Maintain a Period of Continuous Sobriety.** Prior to being hired as the director on NCDC, I was a prosecutor for 15 years and then I trained prosecutors on how to prosecute impaired drivers for another 8 years. NCDC is a professional services division of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP), established in 2007 and founded through a partnership with Beam Global Spirits & Wine, Inc. The purpose of NCDC is to raise awareness about the success of DWI Courts, provide training, technical assistance and research to DWI Courts, and establish new DWI Courts nationwide.

SB 660 looks at repeat DWI offenders and uses continuous alcohol monitoring as a tool to ensure continued sobriety. To date, it has been left to the traditional courts and criminal justice system to deal with impaired driving cases, and it has become clear that the traditional process is not working for repeat offenders. **Punishment, unaccompanied by treatment and accountability, is an ineffective deterrent for the repeat DWI offender.** The research on this is clear. The outcome for the offender is continued dependence on alcohol; for the community, continued peril.

Repeat DWI offenders pose a threat to society in a way very different from first time DWI offenders; so many jurisdictions are establishing a DWI Court. The goal of a DWI Court is to protect public safety by using the highly successful Drug Court model that uses accountability and long-term treatment to address the root cause of impaired driving: alcohol and other substance abuse. As of December 2008, there are 532 DWI Courts in operation in the nation.

One of the tools that DWI Courts use when changing the behavior of repeat DWI offenders is continuous alcohol monitoring. **It is an important tool that allows the court to ensure the person wearing such a device has not been drinking alcohol, at anytime.** When combined with long term treatment, DWI

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Courts have been reducing the recidivism of these individuals on a significant basis.

According to a Michigan study released in late 2007, DWI Courts are effective in reducing recidivism and reducing drug and alcohol use while using less criminal justice system resources to accomplish these goals. In one of the courts studied, in a 2-year period, **traditional court offenders in the comparison group were more than three (3) times more likely to be re-arrested for any charge and were nineteen (19) times more likely to be re-arrested for a DWI charge than the DWI Court participants.**

In addition to being more effective, DWI Courts use less criminal justice resources, costing less than traditional courts, according to the same study. By using resources like continuous alcohol monitoring, DWI Courts are able to ensure the person has not been drinking, protect the community and save critical funding.

With the passage of SB 660, the courts are assured to have an important tool assuring continued sobriety, a vital part of any effort for rehabilitation. Thank you for considering this letter in support of SB 660.

David Wallace
Director