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March 24, 2009

To: Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Jon Matthews, Legal Director, ACLU of Connecticut

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUPPORTING COMMITTEE BILL NO. 349, AN ACT  
CONCERNING THE PENALTY FOR POSSESSION OF A SMALL AMOUNT  
OF MARIJUANA.**

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a national, nonprofit advocacy organization that actively supports drug policy reform throughout the United States. The ACLU of Connecticut is the state affiliate of the national ACLU.

Our organization has long supported fair and practical law reform measures that mitigate the enormous civil liberties losses suffered by our civic institutions, legal system, and families.

This legislation, making the possession of a small amount of marijuana a civil infraction, is a significant step toward rational drug policy for the state. This approach would remove many criminal cases from the prosecutorial apparatus and make prisons less crowded. Furthermore, this bill would conserve important societal resources, including law enforcement, legal, and court costs.

Many other states (including Maine, New York, and Massachusetts) have already adopted similar laws and have experienced no increase in marijuana use, no increase in marijuana-related crime, and no increase in juvenile use.

The ACLU of Connecticut welcomes the opportunity to express our support for this bill and respectfully requests that this Committee work for its passage this session.