



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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**Testimony of Michelle Cruz, State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Committee on Public Safety and Security
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Good morning Senator Stillman, Representative Dargan and distinguished members of the Committee on Public Safety and Security. For the record, my name is Michelle Cruz and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT** of:

Raised Bill No. 906, *An Act Concerning the Collection of DNA Samples*

DNA collection and analysis gives the criminal justice field a powerful tool for convicting the guilty and exonerating the innocent. However, as with any tool, its effectiveness can be measured by its usage. As of October 2006, the CT DNA Database has aided over 325 reported crimes as a result of database matches and new matches are being generated at the rate of 2-3 per week (Department of Public Safety; Forensic Science Laboratory).

Raised Bill No. 906 will transfer the responsibility of the collection of DNA from sex offenders from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to the Court Support Services Division (CSSD), Judicial Branch. The OVA strongly believes that the collection of DNA, for all defendants that are required to submit, not just those from sex offenders, should be taken after a defendant has pled guilty but prior to a defendant being sentenced. Far too many defendants are advised by the court of their obligation to submit a DNA sample and later, refuse or fail to do so. CSSD is the likely agent to collect the DNA as defendants are already at the court and available at the time of plea.

Additionally, the bill proposes to expand the offense and penalty for those who fail or refuse to submit to a DNA sample as required. As with any order of the court or requirement pursuant to a conviction of certain statutes, those who refuse or fail to comply should face severe consequences. It is the integrity of the system that is being challenged and should not be tolerated.

The benefits of DNA collection and analysis have been realized in Connecticut and across the country. I strongly urge the committee to support the proposal and improve a verified benefit to the criminal justice field. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

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