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

Raised Bill No. 476
An Act Concerning Nonviolent Drug Possession Offenses

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 19, 2010

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports passage of *Raised Bill No. 476, An Act Concerning Nonviolent Drug Possession Offenses.* This proposal would make it an infraction for any person to possess less than one ounce of marijuana or possess drug paraphernalia. Current law provides that a person charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, even if a very minor amount can be sentenced up to one year in jail and/or fined up to $1,000.00. In addition, current law provides that a person in possession of paraphernalia, as defined by statute, can be sentenced up to 3 months in jail and/or be fined.

A conviction for possession of marijuana or paraphernalia can impact upon a person's ability to obtain employment and housing over time. While a person may be impacted by unintended consequences of the conviction, resources are spent by this state and municipalities on the prosecution, incarceration and/or probation supervision of the convicted person. During these strained economic times, such resources may be better utilized by law enforcement, the prosecution and the courts in the investigation and prosecution of more serious crimes.

The Office of Chief Public Defender requests this committee to support this proposal.