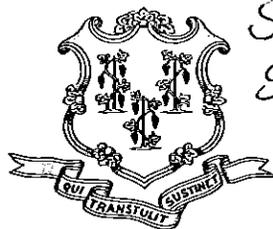


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March 19, 2010

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am here to testify in support of S.B. 476, AN ACT CONCERNING NONVIOLENT DRUG POSSESSION OFFENSES and S.B. 475, AN ACT CONCERNING NONVIOLENT OFFENDERS.

S.B. 476 represents a compassionate and pragmatic policy. Our state should not encourage illegal drug possession and use; however, possession of small amounts of illicit substances and related paraphernalia for personal use should not leave a person with a life-long criminal record. In addition, the bill would create budgetary savings in these challenging times since it would reduce costs to police departments, the court system, and the offices of the public defenders and the states attorneys.

S.B. 475 would provide additional cost effective reforms to the justice system. This bill would allow the court and correctional personnel to assess offenders who are convicted or plead guilty to nonviolent crimes and consider using home confinement with a GPS monitoring device in lieu of incarceration. This bill would allow for treatment and punishment that would improve the chances of these nonviolent offenders returning as productive members of our society. This bill would underscore the principle of proportionality in our criminal justice system and would represent a public policy that prison is primarily a place for offenders who are truly dangerous and not for those whose conduct simply merits some punishment. The courts and the department of corrections have a great deal of skill and experience in reform and punishment of offenders; we should put this skill and experience to good use in a manner that would increase the rationality of our justice system as well as ease the state's budget crisis.

Thank you for raising these important issues.