



State of Connecticut
DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Testimony of the Division of Criminal Justice

**H.B. No. 5207 (RAISED) An Act Concerning Criminal Background
Checks for Prospective State Employees**

Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees
February 25, 2010

H.B. No. 5207, an *Act Concerning Criminal Background Checks for Prospective State Employees*, would limit the ability of a state agency to request a credit report for a prospective employee until after a conditional offer of employment is made. The Division would respectfully request that the Committee specifically draft any final version of this legislation so as to not limit or adversely affect the ability of the Division of Criminal Justice and other state agencies to conduct background investigations, including credit checks and consumer reports, on those nominated for positions of public trust.

As stated in our testimony on H.B. No. 5061, *An Act Eliminating Credit Reports as a Basis for Employment Decisions*, the use of credit scores, credit account balances, payment histories, bank account balances and other credit information plays a critical role in ensuring that those who occupy positions of public trust are not susceptible to improper influence. Many of these officials not only exercise considerable authority over the lives of others, but they also routinely come into possession of sensitive personal information that must be kept confidential. A critical means of ensuring that those who occupy these positions will not be subjected to improper influence or pressures to breach the public trust is ensuring that their financial obligations are consistent with their resources. A candidate for any such position who is in significant financial distress might well be susceptible to compromising the public's trust to avoid financial peril. Moreover, significant financial difficulties that are uncovered during a background investigation may signal other problems in the applicant's or nominee's background such as chemical dependency, gambling, or inappropriate relationships that again might be used to compromise the public official's integrity.

For these reasons, the Division of Criminal Justice would ask that H.B. No. 5061 be carefully crafted to assure that it does not infringe upon the ability of the Division or other state agencies to conduct thorough background investigations of individuals nominated for positions of public trust. The Division would be happy to work with the Committee to craft such language.

Respectfully submitted,

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