

**TESTIMONY OF TINA LONG
TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 5521
AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD WELFARE AND THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM
AND ERASURE OF JUVENILE RECORDS**

MARCH 19, 2010

My name is Tina Long and I support **Raised Bill No. 5521, *An Act Concerning Child Welfare and the Juvenile Justice System and Erasure of Juvenile Records***. Based on my experience with the juvenile justice system, through my child who is now fourteen years old, I believe that change is necessary in order to provide better opportunities for youth. **Raised Bill No. 5521 addresses two important issues affecting minority youths – the use of detention centers and erasure of juvenile records.**

The first important issue addressed is the use of detention centers as a means to punish juveniles for their mistakes. I believe that detention centers are not the best alternative for youth who come in contact with the juvenile justice system. In fact, detention centers are counterproductive in that they deprive children and youth the opportunity to learn from their mistakes by stigmatizing and isolating youth that need the support of their families and their community.

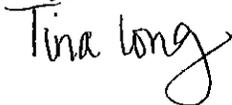
By mandating that a judge sign a detention order before admitting a youth to a detention center, **Raised Bill No. 5521 ensures that juveniles are treated equally and receive the necessary services in order to address the root causes of their behavior.** This bill increases the likelihood of a youth benefitting from community-based alternatives or other programs that are more effective than the negative effects from being held at a detention center.

The second issue addressed by this bill is that of automatic erasure for juvenile records. **This section of Raised Bill No. 5521 improves opportunities for minority children** by automatically erasing some juveniles' records after the proper requirements are met. Currently, a youth's family has to petition the court in order to have a record erased. By automatically erasing a juvenile's record, the system better enables these youths to become productive members of our society. By not approving the bill, the system further decreases a youth's, especially a minority youth's, ability to become contributing members of society.

I fully support Raised Bill No. 5521, *An Act Concerning Child Welfare and the Juvenile Justice System and Erasure of Juvenile Records*, and hope that you understand the great importance of this bill. I look forward to seeing this bill progress and fully approved in the near future.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Tina Long
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