



THE ALLIANCE CONNECTICUT

Good afternoon,

My name is Cassidy Weatherington and I am a resident of Windsor CT. I am a member of A Better Way Foundation's Alliance CT. I would first and foremost like to thank you for allowing me to submit a testimony in favor of HB 6475 An Act Concerning Mandatory Minimum Sentences.

I am a graduate of Syracuse University and a Girl Scout Gold Award Recipient for community service. I have spent my life immersed in my community and fulfilling my civic duty as a citizen of Connecticut. Being so involved in my community, I have seen many things. I've seen my community unite for a cause, clean up neighborhoods and come together to support those in need. Contrarily, I have seen families struggle, I've seen families torn apart and I've seen families hopeless.

During the 1960s, drugs like marijuana, amphetamines, and psychedelics came on the scene, and a new generation embraced drugs. With the drug culture exploding, our government developed new laws and agencies to address the problem. In 1973, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration was created to enforce federal drug laws. In the 1970s, cocaine reappeared. Then, a decade later, crack appeared, spreading addiction and violence at epidemic levels. As a result, the federal government and states like Connecticut impose draconian laws like mandatory minimums.

This law has placed generations since in prison. The generation of my mother, my father, my uncles and aunts, my friends' parents and my teachers. Drugs grip the mind, drugs cause addiction. Webster's dictionary defines "Addiction" as a compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance known by the user to be harmful. Once in the grip of illicit drugs, the conscience mind is no longer in control, rather a neurological stronghold requires treatment. Our government seems to be under the impression that the revocation of freedom and confinement is an effective approach to remedy the problem. With an increasing prison population and a steady drug culture, it is obvious that this approach is flawed and ineffective.

The laws concerning mandatory minimum sentencing have not achieved their intended objectives. Rather they strip the ability of elected judges to impose justified discretion resulting in unduly harsh penalties and sentencing inequities. When a charge is brought against an individual, the court is unable to take into consideration the defendants' criminal history, individual characteristics or mitigating circumstances. To what point and purpose is the appointment of a judge if their hands are tied in divulging true justice? 88% of Connecticut's imprisoned citizens have drug convictions. With substance abuse being a neurological problem, 62% of admitted users currently incarcerated DO NOT receive treatment. Therefore, I am pressed to ask, what remedy to the problem is being imposed here? It seems that more bodies are being placed in prisons, more families are being torn apart, more lives are ruined, more futures are stagnated and our state is no better for it. I implore you to abolish mandatory minimums and enact true justice for all.

Thank you,

Cassidy Weatherington
Windsor CT