



State of Connecticut

SENATE

STATE CAPITOL

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

SENATOR TONI NATHANIEL HARP

Tenth District

Legislative Office Building

Room 2700

Capitol 860-240-0393

Toll-free: 1-800-842-1420

Harp@senatedems.ct.gov

Deputy President Pro Tempore

Chair

Appropriations Committee

Member

Executive & Legislative Nominations

Legislative Management

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Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, Ranking Members and all who serve on the Judiciary Committee. I'm state Senator Toni Harp, I represent the 10th District, and I encourage your **favorable consideration of Proposed Bill 434, An Act Concerning Juvenile Justice.**

This initiative is meant to further protect those young people whose lives have reached a crossroads at a very early age. My longstanding concern is that if we don't have suitable policies in place to address the difficulties these children are having, our state could and would in fact undermine their prospects for the future.

More specifically, provisions of this bill would allow credit for 'time served,' in a manner of speaking, for those children arrested for a juvenile offense after having been previously convicted as a delinquent and committed to the custody of the state Department of Children and Families.

I am deeply committed to the idea that these juveniles need help becoming integrated into our society, and that no good is to come from excessive isolation. In my opinion, separating them from society only leads to additional anti-social behavior.

An additional provision of this bill makes any admission, confession, or other statement made by a juvenile to a law enforcement officer or Juvenile Court officer inadmissible in any criminal prosecution of that juvenile. Children are very often insecure and uncertain about their new roles and responsibilities as young adults, and those suspected of crimes are more often than not among the most insecure and uncertain. In many cases, fear drives them to act out inappropriately and unacceptably and that fear rises exponentially in the presence of an authority figure who might hold them accountable. I do not believe an admission, confession, or other statement made while in a fearful state – under duress, I would say – should be used to criminally convict that child.