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Testimony of
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Raised Bill No. 953
An Act Concerning Nonviolent Drug Possession Offenses

Public Hearing - Judiciary Committee
March 14, 2011

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports ***Raised Bill No. 953*** *An Act Concerning Nonviolent Drug Possession Offenses.* **Section 1** of the bill would provide that a person is guilty of an infraction if he/she person possesses a small amount, less than 1 ounce, of marijuana. Instead of facing up to 1 year incarceration for this small amount of marijuana, a person will receive a fine. The most recent *Quinnipiac University Poll* released on March 10, 2011 found that 65% of those polled favored decriminalization of possession of small amounts of marijuana compared to 55% just 2 years ago in March of 2009.

Section 2 of the bill <u>does not</u> eliminate the penalties for persons charged with possession of greater amounts of marijuana. A person arrested for possession of 1 or more ounces but less than 4 ounces of marijuana would still be prosecuted and if convicted, imprisoned up to 1 year for a first offense and up to 5 years for a subsequent offense. Fines and probation can also be imposed in addition to a period of incarceration.

Section 3 provides that a person is guilty of an infraction if he/she violates C.G.S. 21-267(a) and possesses any paraphernalia. Current law provides that violation of this statute is a C misdemeanor for which a person can be imprisoned up to 90 days.

This Office asks that the Committee support this proposed legislation.