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Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Russell London. I am an attorney with the law firm of London & London, located in Newington, Connecticut. I have been practicing law for over 20 years now and I am here today to oppose HB 5388 - An Act Concerning Court Fees and the Delivery of Legal Services to the Poor.

In short, this bill is anti-business and anti-consumer. It looks to raise certain court costs and impose a brand new midstream fee in a so-called effort to help fund legal services for the poor and setup a separate fund apart from the general fund to cover future court technology expenses. What I find extremely troubling is that these fees being sought to be imposed are actually going to hurt many of those people that they are intended to benefit. It makes no sense to make financially distressed people (especially defendants to a law suit) have to come up with additional money to fund statewide legal aid services when they are already in financial trouble. This would be the case when a defendant loses a court case and is now has faced with a judgment against him or her which judgment includes all the state court and service fees. I would submit that, if passed, this bill would effectively act as a hidden tax on a losing defendant in court.

In addition, it makes no sense to make it more expensive for people and businesses who have legitimate financial claims to gain access to our courts. I might understand these new fees if there were an imbalance. However, it is my understanding that more fees are actually being collected by the courts than what is actually spent by the judicial department.

Moreover, the increases are not fair. In September of 2009, the general assembly increased court fees, which more than doubled certain court charges, e.g. filing fees for small claims and bank and wage executions. Now this bill seeks to add additional fees on top of those increases, effectively adding almost 300% to the costs of obtaining access to our small claims courts and for obtaining certain court services since September 2009. What business out there in the private sector can charge 300% more for its goods or services. What consumer can afford to see his expenses tripled in less than 3 years.

Page - 2 -

Another puzzling part of this bill is that it seeks to impose a new "mid- proceeding" charge or what I would consider a "toll" charge. Although you have already paid a \$300.00 filing fee for either a civil or family superior court case, you cannot now claim a matter to trial without paying an additional \$125.00 charge. This effectively raises the price of going to trial by more than 30%.

Again, I can understand there is a need to fund legal aid services and to pay for the judicial departments computers; however, this is not the way to do it. Increasing the access charge to our court system and saddling losing defendants with additional financial liabilities makes no sense, especially in these tough economic times.

Accordingly, I encourage members of this committee to vote against HR 5388. If you have any questions, I would be happy to entertain those questions now. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Russell L. London