

Judiciary Committee Members,

My name is David Samuels; I'm the founder of the Community Party, a racial justice group. I urge you to pass H.B. 6581 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION REGARDING LENGTHY SENTENCES FOR CRIMES COMMITTED BY A CHILD OR YOUTH. One of the root causes of poverty in communities of color is the ripple effect of Black mass incarceration, which produces a population that is barred from educational opportunities, gainful employment, certain types of housing and other vital aspects of community life as a result of criminal convictions. Blacks and Latinos in Connecticut are incarcerated at a disproportionate rate to whites. A Pew research study found that a white male with a felony conviction has the same chance of being hired for a job as a Black male with no record, so you can imagine what the odds are for a Black male with a legal history. Black/Latino unemployment has reached Depression-era levels; the unemployment rate for young Black males in some areas of Connecticut is as high as 50%. Connecticut's poverty rate is annually one of the highest in the United States, averaging more than 30%. The prison industrial complex is one of the components fueling all of these numbers. Passing H.B. 6581 would be a small step toward addressing structural racism in this state.

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