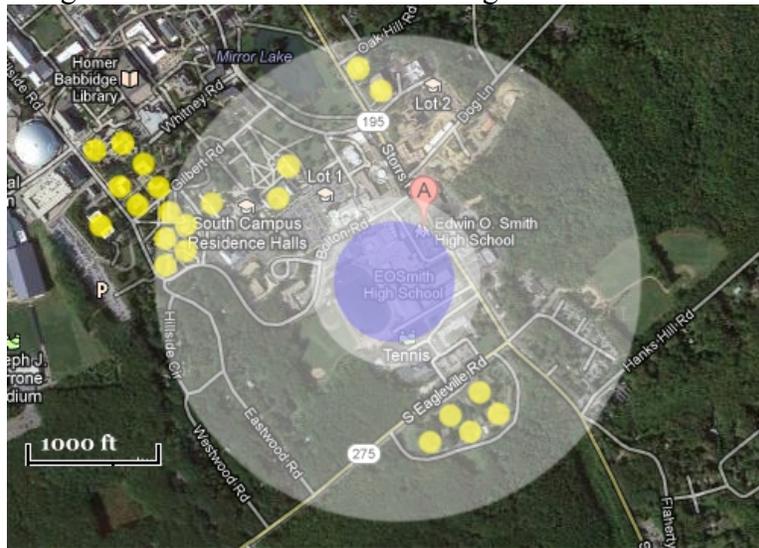


Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I write to you in **strong support of SB 259, which would reduce drug-free zones from 1500 feet to 200 feet from schools**, day cares, and public housing, and adopt the related recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission. Our current laws, while well-intentioned, are not effective at reducing students' access to drugs and have had disastrous side effects in our cities and across the state.

While I currently live in DC where I head Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP), an international drug policy reform organization, I grew up in South Windsor and attended UConn as an undergraduate. I helped pay my tuition by working as a resident assistant, where I was in charge of enforcing drug policies in University-owned housing. During that time, I met dozens of students who were arrested for drug violations (typically marijuana), and a surprising number were charged not only with simple possession, but possession in a school zone. **These students were not selling drugs to schoolchildren, nor were they on school grounds — they were using marijuana in their dorm rooms.** While this is obviously against the law, it is unjust that these students faced additional penalties for being in a school zone while they had no interaction with schoolchildren.

This is because some of UConn's dorms fall within 1500 feet of E.O. Smith High School. The map below shows the effects of our current laws: about 2700 students currently live in University housing that falls within a school zone. Shrinking the zone to 200 feet would bring that number down to zero.



The blue circle is the perimeter of EO Smith High School. The large white circle represents 1500' from the perimeter, and the small white circle represents 200' from the perimeter. Each yellow dot is a UConn-owned residential building.

Of course, this pales in comparison to the havoc these zones have wrought in Connecticut's cities. New Haven, which is almost one huge school zone, has been cited in national studies as an example of drug-free zones gone wrong. This not only leads to institutionalized racism in our criminal justice system, it defeats the entire purpose of the law: **If everywhere is a school zone, nowhere is**, as drug dealers have no incentive to avoid selling near school property.

Sincerely,
Sam Tracy
Chairman of Students for Sensible Drug Policy
UConn Student Body President 2011-2012