



Public Testimony regarding SB 259 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION REGARDING THE ENHANCED PENALTY FOR THE SALE OR POSSESSION OF DRUGS NEAR SCHOOLS, DAY CARE CENTERS AND PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS.

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Tyler Williams and I am currently a resident of Storrs, CT and a history student at the University of Connecticut. I am also the Treasurer of UConn's chapter of Students for Sensible Drug Policy. As a Connecticut resident for my entire life, I have resided in small towns such as Oxford, and cities like New Haven. My experience living, studying, and working across our state has provided me with a comprehensive perspective on the disparate nature of our current drug-free school zone policies.

The majority of space in cities such as Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, falls into the category of 'an area near a school, day care center, or public housing'. For residents, getting caught with what the state of Connecticut has deemed a decriminalized amount of marijuana still results in similar punishment to not having the substance decriminalized at all. While enforcing sensible drug policy such as keeping drugs out of the hands of young children is important, the reality of the situation is people are unfairly punished depending on their geographical circumstances. This policy disproportionately affects communities of color and low income, as they are concentrated in Connecticut's urban areas. The state of Connecticut simply does not need to make life more difficult than it already is for these families.

Finally, I believe it is of the utmost importance to maintain a drug free atmosphere in our school systems. Drugs have markedly adverse affects on young people, and as such, keeping them separate is one of the goals of Students for Sensible Drug Policy, and should be one of the State. The way the current school zone policies stands, there is no disincentive for malicious individuals to sell drugs to our children. When an entire city, such as New Haven, qualifies as a "drug free school zone", the penalties for distributing drugs anywhere are effectively the same. An illegal transaction in an adult residence becomes just as harshly penalized as an illegal transaction in or around a school. The message this sends to residents of our urban areas is that the State makes no differentiation between selling drugs to minors and selling drugs to adults. The current policies are antithetical to the intent with which they were created.

I implore you to pass SB 259, in order to bring sensibility and justice to Connecticut's drug policy. But most of all, I ask that you consider the passing of this bill as a crucial part of protecting our students and families from the effects of drugs in society.

Sincerely,
Tyler Williams
Treasurer – UConn Students for Sensible Drug Policy
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