



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

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Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 16, 2015

**Raised Bill 1087, An Act Concerning Sexual Offender Registration Laws,
Residency Restrictions for Registered Sexual Offenders and Reentry Housing**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch concerning **Raised Bill 1087, An Act Concerning Sexual Offender Registration Laws, Residency Restrictions for Registered Sexual Offenders and Reentry Housing**. The bill establishes three tiers of sexual offenders with different reporting requirements, requires convicted sex offenders to reside at least 1,000 feet away from a school or child care center and requires that the Department of Correction provide notice to municipalities about proposed reentry housing.

The Judicial Branch has concerns with section 45 of the bill, which would prohibit any registered sex offender from residing within 1,000 feet of a school or day care center, especially in the larger urban areas. Locating and approving appropriate housing for sex offenders can be challenging, as most sex offenders have limited choices with regard to housing, and a homeless sex offender is at greater risk for recidivism than one who has housing. If this requirement is enacted, it will make it even more difficult to find suitable housing for sex offenders.

As background, adult probation officers must approve the residence of all sex offenders. This requires probation officers to conduct home visits and to conduct a thorough review of each case, taking into consideration the client's conviction, the sex offender registration, details of the police report, a review of the neighborhood, present involvement in treatment and the individual's success or failure in treatment. For

example, a sex offender may want to live 2,500 feet from a school, but the location may be two blocks away from a school bus stop. The probation officer may not approve of this residence. Conversely, a probation officer may determine that a 17-year-old who was convicted of having sex with his 14-year-old girlfriend may live within 1,000 feet of a school. It is best to allow probation officers to use their discretion. For these reasons, the Judicial Branch is opposed to Section 45 of the bill.

The bill also establishes three tiers of sex offenders with different requirements. While the creation of a tiered registry is a policy matter for the Legislature, the Branch does anticipate it having an impact on our adult probation officers. For example, Subsection (f) of Section 7 of the bill requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to mail a verification form by first class mail to the last reported address of each registered sex offender. The sex offender is then required to appear in person with the form to the prescribed office of the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) ten days after the form was mailed, where a photograph will be taken and required information will be updated. Registrants who are designated as Tier 1 are required to complete this verification process annually; registrants designated as Tier 2 are required to complete the verification process every six months; and registrants designated as Tier 3 are required to complete the verification process every 90 days. If the registered sex offender fails to report to the CSSD office at the designated time, a representative of the Court Support Services Division is required to notify the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection.

This verification process will increase the workload of adult probation officers assigned to the sex offender unit, and they already have a significant workload. Additionally, the probation offices, which will be designated as the reporting offices, do not currently have the equipment necessary to conduct a fingerprint verification or the background screening necessary for the photographs. Should this bill be enacted, we will work with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection on these implementation issues.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony concerning this bill.