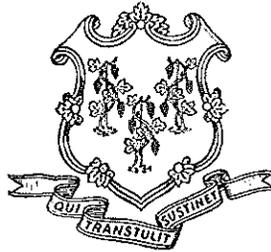


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March 16, 2015
LOB 2E 12:00 PM

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

Chairman Coleman, Chairman Tong, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for hearing SB 1087. I am here to testify in support of **Senate Bill 1087**, *An Act Concerning Sexual Offender Registration Laws, Residency Restrictions for Registered Sexual Offenders, and Reentry Housing*.

The majority of Connecticut residents believe that sexual violence is a problem in their community. In fact, one in five Connecticut residents has experienced a sexual assault and one in eleven women in Connecticut reported being a survivor of rape. If there was something more that our state could do to protect our community against sexual assault, then we must commit to act. As such, a continued focus on prevention based policy is urgently needed. We should amend our current laws to provide Connecticut with reasonable and proper means for protecting the public when offenders are reintroduced into the community.

As you know, sex offender registration laws assist law enforcement in monitoring the location of sex offenders and we need to increase awareness of offenders living within the community. However, this constructive end cannot be successfully accomplished when offenders are placed in reentry housing in residential areas without notice to the community. As we have seen in Norwich, residents are discovering that sex offenders are living in their neighborhoods months after their reentry into the community. I applaud the committee for including, in sections 45 and 46 of the underlying bill, provisions requiring that prior notice must be given to the community whenever the Department of Correction is going to enter into a contract for the placement of a halfway house in the community.

Secondly, I want to thank the committee for also including provisions calling for greater information on the details of the actions leading to the conviction of a sex offender. With this information, the public can analyze the sex offenders' crimes to determine whether children, adults, or the elderly are most at risk. At this time, convicted sex offenders are required to register with their local law enforcement or corrections agency and provide information including their name, address, date of birth and more. However, convicted sex offenders are not currently required to provide information on the details of the actions leading to their conviction. With this amendment, our communities will be provided with more information on the details of the conviction to determine who is the most at risk within a community.

Third, I want to again thank the committee for including a tiered system of classifying sex offenders on the sex offender registry, which would require a risk assessment of the offender. Under the tiered system, sex offenders would be classified as Tier I, Tier II and Tier III, based on the severity of the committed sexual offense. Several neighboring states, including Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New Hampshire and Maine, have successfully adopted a tiered system of classifying sex offenders. With this statutory change, the public will have more information regarding the severity of offenders' crimes and the risk the offender poses to the public. Additionally, risk level determinations will provide a careful review to ensure that sex offender registration carries out the legislative intent of protecting our communities.

Lastly, I would like to suggest that title 53a should be amended to increase penalties for the sexual assault of a child or a senior citizen. As many of you know, the elderly and children are among the most vulnerable populations to sexual assault. Between 2009 and 2013, 1.3 percent of sexual assaults reported were assaults to victims older than 60. However, this number will most likely grow because the state's population of people 65 or older is projected to grow by 57-percent by 2040. In addition, convalescent and senior living homes do not offer elderly residents the necessary screening to protect the elderly from sexual assault within the community. More often than not, sex offenders do not believe that their crimes will result in an arrest or a conviction. However, increased penalties for these crimes can supply the overall deterrent effect because of the certainty of punishment. Potential offenders must be aware of the increased sanction risks and consequences before they commit a sexual assault of a child or a senior citizen. Therefore, I believe increased penalties will have a deterrent effect within the community.

Understandably, individuals leaving the prison system have an interest in transitioning out of the correctional system and ultimately living a positive life in society. However, the state has a vital interest to protect the safety of the public. We can balance these interests by the means of this legislation by providing communities notice of the possible housing of offenders, and information on the details leading up to the sex offender's conviction. A tiered system on the sex offender registry and increased penalties for sexual assaults will also have a long-term impact on protecting the public's safety.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 1087. And I look forward to working with the leadership and members of this committee on this bill's passage.