



State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106

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Good Afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, Honorable members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Subira Gordon and I am the legislative Analyst for the African American Affairs Commission. The mission of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) is to improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut. I am writing today to support SB 1127 AN ACT CONCERNING MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES FOR CHILDREN TRIED AS ADULTS, HB 7042 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN BY THE COMMISSIONER OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES and HB 7050 AN ACT CONCERNING THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM.

It has been proven that children's brains are not fully developed until after their teen years. SB 1127 allows a trial judge to order a sentence lesser than the mandatory minimum for a certain crime. The disproportionate contact that minorities have with the justice system, more specifically the juvenile justice system, makes this bill beneficial to the minority community in the state. Less time in prison allows for better outcomes for individuals who may have made a mistake and are not in need of a maximum prison sentence in order to make changes in their lives.

The department in children and families should be a safe place for children who are in need. HB 7042 eliminates the ability of DCF to transfer a child into the protection of the Department of Correction. Many of the children who enter into the care of DCF are facing tremendous difficulties in their lives and are in need of rehabilitation and protection, not a criminal record. The AAAC strongly supports this bill because we would like to ensure that DCF is doing all in its power to protect children and their families.

Next the AAAC supports HB 7050 because it reduces the unnecessary shackling of juveniles, continues the work of the JJPOC and raises the age for certain offences. The JJPOC has been a leader in making critical beneficial recommendations on the juvenile justice system in the state and should remain in statute until all the work of making the state's juvenile justice system one that is perfect and has no issues. Shackling juveniles that prove to be of no harm to themselves or society sends the wrong message to already vulnerable youth who have entered into the juvenile justice system. There is no benefit to treating individuals like slaves as this has serious physiological effects on those being shackled. It is good public policy to reduce and hopefully eliminate this practice.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Subira Gordon