

CCDLA
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FOUNDED IN 1988

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March 30, 2015

Senator Eric Coleman, Co-Chair
Representative William Tong, Co-Chair
Judiciary Committee
Room 2500, Legislative Office Building,
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Testimony regarding Raised Bill No. 1117, An Act Concerning Certain Misdemeanors

Dear Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and Committee Members:

The CCDLA is a not-for-profit organization of approximately three hundred lawyers who are dedicated to defending persons accused of criminal offenses. Founded in 1988, the CCDLA is the only statewide criminal defense lawyers' organization in Connecticut. An affiliate of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, the CCDLA works to improve the criminal justice system by insuring that the individual rights guaranteed by the Connecticut and United States constitutions are applied fairly and equally and that those rights are not diminished.

The CCDLA agrees with the recommendation of the Office of the Chief Public Defender with reference to Raised Bill No. 1117, An Act Concerning Certain Misdemeanors. As written, this bill has a significant unintended consequence and should be referred to the Sentencing Commission for further review and revision. In its current form this proposal would transform a one year sentence for an unclassified misdemeanor into a felony conviction. The original intent of this bill was to simply reduce the maximum penalty for certain A misdemeanors from one year (365 days) to 364 days in order to protect legal permanent resident defendants from harsh immigration consequences. Unfortunately, as drafted, this proposal would result in an entirely unintended statutory structural change as noted above. For this reason, the CCDLA strongly urges this Committee to refer this bill to the Sentencing Commission for review and revision.

Respectfully submitted,



Elisa L. Villa, President
CCDLA