

-YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

Testimony of Michael Bogaty
[Member/Position], Yale College Democrats

March 14, 2016
505 College Street
New Haven, CT 06511

In favor: S.B. 18

An Act Concerning A Second Chance Society.

When crafting criminal justice policy, it's important to consider the real people involved and the impacts said policies have on their lives. Specifically, in this case, it is vital that we recognize that the people being affected are young and still developing as individuals. Young people make mistakes. That's a fact. As a nineteen year old, I can not pretend that I am fully mature and make every decision with the appropriate consideration. Brain studies confirm this, showing that the human mind does not fully develop until one's twenties. This is not to say that youth offenders are not at all culpable for their crimes. However, it is crucial that as a society we recognize that these individuals still have the potential to become productive members of society. One relatively minor youthful indiscretion should not dictate the entire future of someone no older than a college freshman.

Its for this reason that it is incredibly important that we grant a second chance to those under the age of twenty-one convicted of minor crimes. Currently, an eighteen year old who commits a misdemeanor as small as marijuana possession or vandalism will have that offense on her record for the rest of her life. It is important not to understate the importance of this. Thirty years later, someone who shoplifted around the time they were attending senior prom may still have difficulties gaining employment. If the state of Connecticut places any value on mercy, forgiveness, or the potential for rehabilitation, it is imperative that these people be given a second chance. The proposed legislation would do just that, as these minor crimes would no longer remain on the permanent records of these youth. This would ensure that they have an

equal opportunity to, upon completion of their sentences, re-enter society as fully productive members.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the inequalities status quo policies lead to. A vastly disproportionate amount of the prison population in this age group are people of color. Compared to whites, people of color are more likely to be charged and are give harsher sentences for the exact same crimes. Numerous studies confirm this. Poor blacks do not have the same resources to hire the high-powered lawyers with the connections to get charges dropped. Giving a second chance to these youth would be one small step in addressing this problem, which is a large part of why the black unemployment rate remains well above that for whites both in Connecticut and nationwide. Meanwhile, giving a criminal record for eighteen, nineteen, and twenty year olds will only re-entrench a cycle of poverty, recidivism, and reincarnation.

I hope that the legislature will recognize the value in second chances and work to pass the proposed legislation.

Sincerely,

Michael Bogaty