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*State Victim Advocate*

Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate  
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee  
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Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

Senate Bill No. 363, *An Act Concerning Revisions to Various Statutes Concerning the Criminal Justice System*

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) supports Sections 4, 5, 8 and 9 of Senate Bill No. 363.

**Section 4:** Pursuant to C.G.S. 53a-28(c), in addition to any sentence imposed by the court, if the defendant is convicted of an offense that resulted in injury to another person or damage to or loss of property, the victim has requested restitution and the court finds that the victim has suffered a loss, the court shall order the defendant to make financial restitution to the victim.

In many cases, the court orders restitution as a condition of probation and/or the court will enter a written order of restitution, which is enforceable as a judgment in a civil action. These orders are enforceable for 10 years, in contrast to the 20 year time period for orders issued in civil court. As the written order of restitution, issued by the criminal court, is enforceable as a judgment in a civil action, this order should carry the same duration of time as other judgments in civil court.

The Governor's Victims' Rights Enforcement Advisory Commission (VREAC) identified this issue as a barrier for crime victims, typically in cases where a defendant had been ordered to pay restitution, then subsequently violated his/her probation and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The extension from ten to twenty years, consistent with other civil order judgments, will ensure that victims are not penalized by time, while the offender inadvertently benefits from time. The OVA would like to thank the Division of Criminal Justice for including this proposal in their legislative agenda and urge the Committee's favorable report.

**Section 5:** Currently, the court may issue a standing criminal protective order (SCPO), often referred to as a lifetime order of protection, when a defendant is convicted of certain criminal offenses and the court finds that the SCPO will best serve the interests of the victim. However,

in cases where the defendant participates in a diversionary program and subsequently earns a dismissal or nolle, the victim cannot request the SCPO due to the lack of a conviction. Section 5 will remove this barrier for those victims seeking continued protection regardless of the manner in which the criminal case is resolved.

Sections 8 & 9: Currently, the name, address and telephone number of a victim of sexual assault is confidential to ensure the privacy of the victim. Interestingly, the privacy protections afforded to victims of sexual assault were passed the same year (1981) that Connecticut recognized and codified spousal sexual assault as a crime. Yet, for reasons unknown, this subset of sexual assault victims were not provided the same privacy protections as other sexual assault victims. The impact suffered by a victim of sexual assault is no less if the offender is a spouse or intimate partner. Sections 8 & 9 will correct this oversight and ensure privacy protections are available for all victims of sexual assault.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony. For the above-stated reasons, I urge the Committee's favorable report.