



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

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Testimony of the Judicial Branch
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 18, 2016

H.B. 5629, An Act Concerning a Diversionary Program for Persons
Under Age Twenty-One for Motor Vehicle Violations and
Crimes Related to Underage Drinking

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch regarding H.B. 5629, An Act Concerning a Diversionary Program for Persons Under Age Twenty-One for Motor Vehicle Violations and Crimes Related to Underage Drinking. The Judicial Branch has some fiscal and technical concerns with the bill as proposed.

Currently, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) offers a program modeled after this proposal on an informal basis. If a judge is made aware of this program, the judge may recommend the program as an alternative to incarceration. The bill appears to codify this program. Should the Committee decide to act favorably on this proposal, we would respectfully request that the program be modeled after the victim impact panel established pursuant to C.G.S. sec. 14-227(a) (l). We believe that the language in 14-227(a) (l) would more accurately define this program and how it would operate within the Branch.

Thank you for taking our concerns into consideration.

Testimony of Dennis M. Cahill, to the Judiciary Committee in support of S.B. 428 regarding funding for Legal Services to the Poor.

Good evening and thank you to the Committee Chairs and members for hearing my testimony. My name is Dennis Cahill and I have lived at 651 State Street, Bridgeport the past fifteen years. My building is a supportive housing facility owned by Alpha Community Services branch of Central Connecticut Coast YMCA, and is designed exclusively to provide affordable, permanent rental housing for the homeless population in the Bridgeport area.

As you might surmise, residents coming out of homelessness require a large amount of remedial services, including legal assistance. Since the building opened in year 2000, the social services department has referred residents with lease or eviction problems to Connecticut Legal Services. Connecticut Legal Services has also conducted legal education workshops at the building to inform residents of their rights, and represented individual residents where management has been negligent on some points in the lease. Most of our residents are at very low income or on disability or low fixed income. Connecticut Legal Services has provided this service free of charge as most residents are below 110% of poverty line.

In 2014 Alpha Community Services was granted a \$20 rent increase by Bridgeport Housing Authority to cover increased operating expenses. This increase was not approved or paid by H.U.D. from Washington, so was added entirely to residents rent and put most residents above the 30% of income guideline for Section 8 participants. Some residents received increases of \$100 or more. As President of our Tenant Association, I was referred to Connecticut Legal Services through a personal contact and they agreed to take this case in July 2014. Again, this was done free of charge to residents.

The case settled without going to court in January 2016. With average rent credits of \$600 each resident for the previous two years of over charges. May the committee understand how satisfied the residents are not only with the outcome of this rent case, but with Connecticut Legal Services' very high success rate in eviction prevention the previous fifteen years. Connecticut Legal Services is the only firm providing free services in the Bridgeport area for this population. Along with our satisfaction, I also express gratitude that we have Connecticut Legal Services to represent low income residents. Without Connecticut Legal Services assistance, no resident could have made this case to Housing Authority from their own resources.

I ask the committee to Support S.B. 428 so that Connecticut Legal Services may continue their operations on behalf of our residents.