



NATASHA M. PIERRE, ESQ.
State Victim Advocate

Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
Wednesday, March 23, 2016

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 in **OPPOSITION** to:

Senate Bill No. 18, An Act Concerning A Second Chance Society
Senate Bill No. 473, An Act Concerning a Petition for Release from the Requirement to Register as a Sexual Offender for Life
House Bill No. 5529, An Act Concerning Sexual Offender Registration Laws, Residency Restriction for Registered Sexual Offenders
House Bill No. 5642, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Policy Oversight Committee

Crime victims have a State Constitutional right to receive information about the arrest, conviction, sentence, imprisonment and release of the accused, and; the right to be reasonably protected throughout the criminal justice process. The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) opposes the above referenced bills because they do not take into consideration these constitutional rights.

Senate Bill No. 18, An Act Concerning A Second Chance Society
House Bill No. 5642, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Policy Oversight Committee

If defendants that are aged 18-20 are going to be considered as minors in the criminal justice system, then the necessary services need to be provided for crime victims.

Juvenile crime victims' Constitutional rights are often violated in the name of confidentiality. Once a defendant is designated as a minor, the process becomes confidential and information that is provided to crime victims is minimal or nonexistent.

Additionally, there are only three victim advocates for 12 juvenile courts, which results in crime victims not receiving the assistance they have a constitutional right to receive. Finally, the

juvenile system does not have a program to address sex offenders. In the adult system, Court Support Services Division (CSSD) has a sex offender supervision unit. Since 2007, this unit has implemented a collaborative model of probation offenders, treatment providers, and sexual assault post-conviction advocates developing a plan to keep victims and the community safe. A similar program should be developed for juvenile offenders.

We respectfully request that these issues be addressed before passage of the bills. Expanding the system without addressing the current imbalance of services will only serve to further harm crime victims.

Senate Bill No. 473, An Act Concerning a Petition for Release from the Requirement to Register as a Sexual Offender for Life

House Bill No. 5529, An Act Concerning Sexual Offender Registration Laws, Residency Restriction for Registered Sexual Offenders

Last year, Special Act No. 15-2 (Senate Bill No. 1087) was passed and it required the Connecticut Sentencing Commission, of which the OVA is a member, to study:

- (1) The sentencing of sexual offenders;
- (2) the risk assessment and management of sexual offenders;
- (3) the registration requirements and registry;
- (4) the information available to the public and law enforcement regarding sexual offenders;
- (5) the effectiveness of a tiered classification system based on the risk of re-offense;
- (6) methods to reduce and eliminate recidivism by individuals convicted of a sexual offense;
- (7) housing opportunities and obstacles for sexual offender registrants;
- (8) options for post-sentence appeals concerning the registry status of a sexual offender registrant;
- (9) sexual offender management; and
- (10) victim and survivor needs and services and community education.

The Connecticut Sentencing Commission has convened five subcommittees to address the mandate, including a subcommittee to address victims' rights. The OVA believes the above referenced proposals are premature, and respectfully request that this proposal be tabled until the Sentencing Commission has had an opportunity to thoroughly analyze the matter. It is essential that the rights and safety of crime victims are not overridden in response to public pressure to fix the sex offender registry.

In the wake of sweeping criminal justice reforms, it is important that the Constitutional rights of crime victims are not lost in such reforms; that those rights are considered to ensure the fair and just treatment of crime victims throughout the criminal justice process. Thank you for consideration of my testimony