



Testimony of James T. Shearin  
President, Connecticut Bar Foundation  
**In Support of Section 27 of Governor's Bill 18,**  
**An Act Concerning a Second Chance Society**  
Judiciary Committee  
March 23, 2016

Good afternoon Sen. Coleman, Rep. Tong, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is James T. Shearin and I offer this testimony as President of the Connecticut Bar Foundation ("Foundation") to express the Foundation's support of **Section 27 of Governor's Bill 18, An Act Concerning a Second Chance Society**.

The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization devoted to funding the delivery of legal services to the poor by providing grants-in-aid to ten, nonprofit civil legal service providers in Connecticut, all of which are dedicated to helping low-income people obtain justice.

Last week, I testified before this committee in support of Senate Bill 428, An Act Concerning Funding of Legal Services for the Poor. I explained that we desperately need an additional \$2 million in funding to address the legal needs of those who constitute Connecticut's poverty population, a group of people who, since 2007, has grown from 268,880 to 374,772. In addition, I described how modest increases to certain court fees would raise an additional \$950,000 on an annual basis and would help prevent the termination of more legal aid lawyer.

While Senate Bill 428 would provide vitally needed help, we still must secure new and sustainable funding sources to fill the \$2 million gap. It is for these reasons that the **Foundation supports Section 27 of Governor's Bill 18**. Section 27 proposes that cash bail bonds posted by criminal defendants be deposited in interest bearing accounts. The interest earned on such deposits and bonds forfeited by accused individuals who fail to appear for a court date would be used to fund civil legal assistance for low income residents. This revenue would supplement other funding sources and help in our efforts to reduce the unmet civil legal needs of Connecticut's low-income population. The Foundation appreciates the historic support that all three branches of state government have given to the state's civil legal aid providers, and applauds the Governor's proposal for addition legal aid funding contained in Governor's Bill 18.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Governor's Bill 18. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.