

Roy, Staci

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To: JudTestimony
Subject: SB 981

Please accept this testimony as part of today's public hearing

The Society of Professional Journalists of Connecticut strongly supports SB 981. The legislation would provide recourse for defendants who are subject to otherwise frivolous lawsuits that are intended solely to scare them from exercising their First Amendment rights. As New York Supreme Court Justice Nicholas Colabella once remarked on strategic litigation aimed at public participation, or SLAPP, suits, "Short of a gun to the head, a greater threat to First Amendment expression can scarcely be imagined."

The five freedoms protected by the First Amendment are crucial to our democracy, but the threat of expensive litigation can deter individuals from exercising their right to speech, peaceful assembly, publish, or otherwise express their views. This bill gives those individuals the opportunity to request that SLAPP suits be thrown on. By providing this protection through a motion for court action, the language also recognizes a plaintiff's right to seek relief for possible injury or loss through the legal system.

SPJ CT believes that SB 981 strikes a good balance, and ask the General Assembly to adopt it.

Mike Savino
President, Society of Professional Journalists of Connecticut