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**Testimony of Juan Hernandez, District Director, 32BJ SEIU**  
**House Bill No. 5544**  
**Judiciary Committee**  
**March 21, 2018**

Thank you to Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, and the members of the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony today. I am writing today in regard to House Bill No. 5544, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission with Respect to Misdemeanor Sentences.

I write on behalf of our members—immigrant and non-immigrant alike. 32BJ represents over 4,500 men and women in the State of Connecticut. Our members are the backbone of the property service industry – building workers; security officers; and office, school, theatre, stadium, and window cleaners. 32BJ members come from 64 different countries, speak 28 different languages, and represent a microcosm of immigrants as well as families with long histories in the U.S. We all share the American Dream—a commitment to making life better for working families and a fundamental respect for the dignity of all people.

As you know, being convicted of a misdemeanor offense in Connecticut that carries a maximum sentence of 365 days can result in severe immigration consequences for non-citizens, including green-card holders who live and work in our state. A non-citizen convicted of a single misdemeanor with a maximum possible sentence of 365 days can be subject to deportation, no matter the severity of the offense. By passing House Bill No. 5544 we can change the maximum sentence for misdemeanor offenses from 365 days to 364. This reform would be a step in the right direction for Connecticut, and would limit the potentially wide-reaching damage that a misdemeanor conviction can have for our fellow immigrant community members.

Immigrants are hard-working and contributing members of our community. The estimated 130,000<sup>i</sup> undocumented immigrants currently living in CT make up about 5%<sup>ii</sup> of our labor force and collectively pay almost \$136 million dollars in tax to the State.<sup>iii</sup> As a state, we need to do our best to make sure that fellow Connecticut residents are not senselessly deported for minor offenses.

At 32BJ, we believe that the proposed sentencing reform is good public policy and we stand strongly in support. As such, we urge you, the Judiciary Committee, vote in support of House Bill No. 5544. Thank you for your time.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2014/11/18/appendix-a-additional-tables-4/> (Table A1)

<sup>ii</sup> Figure based on CT Department of Labor Statistics (<https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/laborforce.asp>) and Pew Research Center Statistics (<http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/09>) (Table A2)

<sup>iii</sup> [http://itep.org/itep\\_reports/2015/04/undocumented-immigrants-state-local-tax-contributions.php#.Vp\\_k8Jgo7cs](http://itep.org/itep_reports/2015/04/undocumented-immigrants-state-local-tax-contributions.php#.Vp_k8Jgo7cs) (Table 1)