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Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
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Good morning Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, 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 concerning:

Raised Bill No. 5544, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission with Respect to Misdemeanor Sentences

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) serves as a member of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission, and submits this testimony in support of its proposal in Raised Bill No. 5544. This bill will reduce the incarceration penalty for a class A misdemeanor from 365 days to 364 days, to address the disconnect between the intent behind Connecticut's law and the current application of federal law.

OVA supports this proposal for limited circumstances and wants to ensure that defendants charged with much more serious crimes who then plead to a lesser offense (A misdemeanor) as part of a plea agreement do not receive any unintended benefit by passage of this bill. Therefore, I request that the proposal reflect its intent by specifically including only those "charged" or "arrested" for only a minor misdemeanor offense, and not those individuals charged or arrested for more serious offenses.

This change will ensure that individuals are not automatically singled out for deportation by the application of federal law, and protect against those who commit more serious offenses from escaping responsibility for their crime, including potential deportation, as a result of the plea bargaining process.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony.