

Make the Road CT
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March 21st, 2018

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing

Testimony SUPPORTING HB5544: AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION WITH RESPECT TO MISDEMEANOR SENTENCES

Dear Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Julio López Varona and I am the State Director of Make the Road Connecticut. At Make the Road Connecticut, our goal is to build the power of Latino and working-class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services.

Make the Road would like to support House Bill 5544: An Act Concerning Connecticut Misdemeanor Sentences. This proposal would reduce the maximum length of all misdemeanor convictions in Connecticut to 364 days. This small change would make a significant difference in the lives of immigrant families, allowing families to stay together who might otherwise be torn apart if one of their members has a misdemeanor conviction. The current maximum sentencing of one year, or 365 days, permits misdemeanors to be considered aggravated felonies in Immigration Court, making the immigrant immediately subject to detention and deportation. Immigrants should not be subject to the harsh effects of deportation for mere misdemeanor convictions.

Misdemeanor sentencing reform would allow formerly incarcerated community members an opportunity to participate in a true second chance society. In addition, it would help foster public confidence in Connecticut's judicial and criminal justice systems, helping stem the cycle of mass incarceration that disproportionately impacts people of color. We cannot allow our family and community members to be torn apart by unjust laws at the federal level. We must take action on a local and state level to help protect the lives of our community members.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julio', written in a cursive style.

Julio López Varona
State Director / Make the Road CT