

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

My name is Edgar Marin and I live in New Haven, Connecticut.

I write to express my support for 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 technical fix could sever a segment of the prison-to-deportation pipeline, which funnels community members who served their time in state correctional facilities directly into immigration detention and deportation proceedings. This means individuals who served mere months or less for minor charges can be ripped away from their families and communities!

In the summer of 2010 I had an issue with local police. At the time I was living in East Haven, and I received a call from my then wife stating she had been involved in a car accident. When I arrived she had already been taken to the hospital but the police were still on scene. I was questioned about the vehicle. The police officer accused me of lending my car out to other undocumented people. My wife did not have a license but she was a U.S. Citizen. I was able to provide evidence of her legal status. I also gave the officer my driver's license, to which the officer responded by asking me where had I obtained my false license, claiming that I did not look like the man in the photo. He asked me for my license number which I did not know off the top of my head. I provided him with my Green Card, to which he responded again by accusing me of illegally purchasing it. Once the tow truck came I attempted to get some of my belongings out of my vehicle, not knowing that once the tow truck latches a vehicle to its truck, one is forbidden to enter the vehicle. The officer attempted to pull me away as he called for backup. It was then that the officer broke my right hand, stun me with a Taser, kneed me in the face, and told me he wanted to kill me. I was assigned a public defender who had me plead guilty to serious criminal charges to avoid serving jail time. I was put under 2 years of probation, which I completed without any problems. After this time, while I was at work, ICE agents showed up to my job. They told me it was regarding my previous issue with local police. I presented them my license and they escorted me to a van. I was handcuffed by the hands, feet, and waist, and taken to Hartford. ICE agents were under the impression I did not speak English and they attempted to have me sign my very own voluntary deportation order. However, I asked for lawyer and was denied bond. I was then sent to Franklin County where I was in complete isolation for four days. I was able to shower for the first time after three days. I could not be placed in the immigration part of the prison because it was full, so I was transferred to the criminal section and spent 2 weeks there.

I obtained representation from a Yale lawyer, who was able to reopen my case and challenge the state charges against me—which included, breach of peace, resisting arrest, and 2nd degree assault charges to an officer. All charges were dropped except the 2nd degree assault, but I was able to get out on bail. Since then, that experience has forever left a traumatizing mark on my family and I. Unable to cope with my anger and rage, I lost my family. My wife and I are now separated. I am seeing a therapist, but the trauma remains. In addition to the psychological trauma, every time to I travel back from my home country Ecuador, I get highly questioned by U.S. Customs regarding my previous altercation with East Haven police. I have also not been

able to obtain my citizenship despite the years that have passed in which I have not had any other problems with police.

I am sharing my story in support of this bill because I am someone who personally knows what happens to immigrant community members who serve more than 365 days. I was wrongly persuaded into pleading guilty to charges I was not responsible for, under the false promise that it would be a safer option. However what most folks don't know, but I now know, is that even as permanent residents or naturalized U.S. Citizens, immigrants are always subject to deportation if charged with serious criminal charges. I also know that many immigrant folks get deported for minor offenses. I want ICE out of Connecticut. I want my community to be given a second chance when minor offenses are committed.

We cannot allow the State of Connecticut to feed community members into an unjust and inhumane deportation machinery. We must ensure that all community members, regardless of immigration status, can live freely once out of state custody.

Misdemeanor sentencing reform would:

- Allow formerly incarcerated community members an opportunity to participate in a true 'second chance society'
- Foster public confidence in Connecticut's judicial and criminal justice systems
- Stem the cycle of mass incarceration that disproportionately impacts people of color
- Allow immigration judges greater discretion to consider the totality of the circumstances in considering applications for immigration relief

Connecticut cannot allow unjust laws at the federal level to tear our people away from their families and communities. Funneling individuals with mere misdemeanor convictions into deportation proceedings runs counter to public safety, peace, and common notions of justice and fairness. Let us protect the rights and lives of our community members.

Sincerely,

Edgar Marin