

**Judiciary Committee**  
**Wednesday, March 28, 2018**

**CHRO Testimony in Support of HB 5544**

**An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing  
Commission with Respect to Misdemeanor Sentences**

Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Cheryl Sharp and I am the Deputy Director of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities ("CHRO"). The CHRO is grateful for the opportunity to provide testimony in support HB 5544, "An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission with Respect to Misdemeanor Sentences."

As the State's civil rights agency, the CHRO has a strong interest in protecting the rights of those living within our borders that are the most vulnerable. This, of course, includes persons who may be undocumented immigrants, most of whom fall within the protected classes in the CHRO's governing statutes. Under current law, if an undocumented person in our state is convicted of a misdemeanor carrying a sentence of 365 days, that person could be detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and deported. HB 5544 would reduce the maximum sentence of certain crimes from 365 days to 364 days. Past federal immigration priorities concentrated on deportation of people who committed series crimes. Not anymore. The current administration's aggressive tactics of federal immigration enforcement ensnares those committing minor offenses. These people have jobs, pay taxes, raise families, and contribute to their communities. We cannot allow our citizens to be torn away from their home because of a minor misdemeanor conviction.

We should join the chorus of other states such as California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington that have passed similar legislation to protect undocumented people from suffering catastrophic consequences disproportionate to their actions.

The CHRO strongly urges this committee to support HB 5544.