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CENTER FOR HEALTH,
EQUITY, AND JUSTICE

**Testimony of Tammy Leach, member of the Katal Center for Health, Equity
and Justice**

**In support of HB 5713, An Act Concerning Inquiries About the Criminal
Convictions of a Prospective Tenant**

Housing Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

February 7, 2019

Good morning members of the Housing Committee. My name is Tammy Leach, member of the Katal Center for Health, Equity and Justice. I thank you for this opportunity to testify on in support of HB 5713, and also in support of HB 5712 and SB 54. I believe that it is necessary for bills to be passed that will allow this population the opportunity of having a foundation that will stabilize their efforts of obtaining a second chance as potential productive citizens within the community.

As I look over the above proposed bills, proposed bill no. 54 is the primary bill that speaks of the very issues that hinders housing options for formerly incarcerated people, and they are “barriers”. With these barriers and not having applicable resources to help eliminate such barriers, does this population an injustice of becoming valuable citizens for themselves, their families and their community. With the inability of obtaining housing and a stabilized foundation, formerly incarcerated people are unable to implement what is needed to ensure themselves of having sustenance, a place of security, providing structure, a routine and most of all the feeling of self-worth.

I have mixed feelings of support with proposed bill 5713 due to the length of time. As with any other discrepancy in life that requires time to heal the past, it is different in the case of a formerly incarcerated person. Because a formerly incarcerated person has committed a crime and has been institutionalized, they are considered to be more of a risk than a person just with bad credit or bankruptcy, etc. Even after serving their sentence, society continues to place these individuals in an “unforgiven” category therefore hindering them from progressing. I believe that seven years is too long of a wait for records to be sealed for a formerly incarcerated person solely because of the issue of obtaining housing is so dim.

In conclusion, I support HB 5713, HB 5712 and SB 54. However, we should reduce the lookback period to three years, as well as provide legislation that would bring stability to the lives of formerly incarcerated people. We need to bring stability to the lives of formerly incarcerated people in the present. The focus should be on the present. It is time for action. Now what are you all going to do? Thank you.