



Testimony submitted by Cindy Prizio, Executive Director, One Standard of Justice, a volunteer-based civil rights organization committed to ensuring that persons accused or convicted of sex offenses in Connecticut are treated constitutionally and fairly by the state before, during, and after their sentences through the use of evidence-based policies.

To the Co-Chairs, Representative Brandon L. McGee, Senator Dennis Bradley, and members of the Housing Committee:

I am writing in support of the bills listed below.

PSB 54 - AN ACT CONCERNING A LANDLORD'S ABILITY TO REVIEW CRIMINAL RECORDS RELATING TO A PROSPECTIVE TENANT.

PHB 5844 – AN ACT REQUIRING HOUSING AUTHORITIES TO PROVIDE VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS TO PROSPECTIVE TENANTS.

PHB 5712 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT CLEAN SLATE LAW.

PHB 5713 - AN ACT CONCERNING INQUIRIES ABOUT THE CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS OF A PROSPECTIVE TENANT.

The 'Clean Slate' and 'Ban the Box' bills:

It is clear that people who have returned from a period of incarceration need our help. If CT prides itself in its criminal justice reform and second chance philosophy two basic needs of all human beings are housing and employment. The hurdles a person who was formerly incarcerated has to overcome can be insurmountable. If the individual has family he or she can turn to it is helpful even life-saving although the burden on the family can be great. Unfortunately, there are many people who do not have family or family with resources. Their existence outside of prison is difficult at best. All people deserve the same basic human rights: the ability to have a family of their own, earn a living wage, have safe affordable housing and equal opportunities for education.

I ask that you support and vote YES for the Clean Slate and Ban the Box bills with two exceptions: eliminate the 7 year look back period. What do individuals do within the seven years? Are we saying it's okay to suffer through homelessness and unemployment during that time and if you survive life may (will?) get easier? And do not discriminate against any class of

offender. Why are there exclusions based on a label? Frequently the decision to exclude a special population is based on bad data and stereotypes sustained by a sensationalized media.

It would be remiss of me if I didn't speak directly about people on the public registry who have the additional stigma of being labeled a sex offender. A person convicted of a sexual offense ends up on the public registry for ten years or life here in CT; their home addresses are published for all to see. Private and public housing is limited or nonexistent respectively. Shelters and senior centers do not widely accept if at all if you are on the registry. This strikes me as odd since people who have committed a sexual offense have the lowest recidivism among any class of offender other than a person who has committed murder. In CT we are in the unique position to have 10 years of data on sexual offense recidivism. I leave you with these statistics:

- 95.9% of sexual offenses are committed by people NOT on the registry
- 22.3% - the disproportionate amount of blacks on the CT registry, though this group makes up just 9.7% of the state population, which leads to further discrimination of people of color.
- 259:27 - total sexual offense arrests by people in general population (257) versus people who were convicted of a second sexual offense (27) in 5 years after release from prison
- 0 – the number of scientific or scholarly studies confirming the registry makes our communities safer

The state of VT after three years of trying to get its public registry free of clerical errors put up a registry without addresses, only towns. People with low risk of re offending are absent from the public registry and are listed on a law enforcement only database.

In MN since the inception of its registration system in 1997, the registry is law enforcement only for people with low risk and people with moderate risk are on a need to know basis. Out of 13,000 on a registry, only 404 are on a public notification, which excludes addresses, and instead lists only a neighborhood or proximity.

As Executive Director of One Standard of Justice, I receive grim phone calls daily from distraught men and women on the registry who are homeless, live in shelters, are being evicted and have nowhere else to go, seniors who don't have access to senior housing and those who do not live in a healthy environment but have no other options. As you can imagine, finding and keeping employment is so much harder if you have a sexual offense, same with housing.

People on the registry along with other "special populations" are often excluded from positive change and reforms. The conclusion one can make is the total lack of understanding by the public and others as the evidence shows that the vast majority of these people will not go on to re offend. People must be looked at as individuals and not as sub groups or special populations. As Representative Klarides said: not all felons are violent and not all misdemeanors are non-violent.

Let us not fail to recognize the possibility of human change. Better Lives mean Safer Communities!

Citations are on our website:

Onestandardofjustice.org

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One general comment needs to be made. Repeatedly individuals convicted of offenses of a sexual nature, and are required to be on the registry, are excluded from benefitting from improvements in the law. One Standard of Justice knows there is no rational basis for their exclusion because multiple studies prove these individuals do not menace public safety as a class. Moreover, there are no studies providing evidence of improvement in public safety because of the registry, and some which indicate that the registry may actually contribute to a decrease in public safety due to the negative impacts of the registry. One Standard of Justice opposes a public registry of any citizen. Please do not allow these individuals to be excluded from the benefits of this legislation.