



Testimony submitted by the Rev. Andrew G. Osmun, Board Member representing One Standard of Justice, Inc., 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.

February 6, 2019

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 which will be the subject of a hearing on Thursday, February 7th.

Testimony Supporting the following bills:

Proposed S.B. No. 54 - AN ACT CONCERNING A LANDLORD'S ABILITY TO REVIEW CRIMINAL RECORDS RELATING TO A PROSPECTIVE TENANT.

Proposed H.B. No. 5844 - AN ACT REQUIRING HOUSING AUTHORITIES TO PROVIDE VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS TO PROSPECTIVE TENANTS.

Proposed H.B. No. 5712 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT CLEAN SLATE LAW.

Proposed H.B. No. 5713 - AN ACT CONCERNING INQUIRIES ABOUT THE CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS OF A PROSPECTIVE TENANT.

Proposed H.B. No. 6074 - AN ACT CONCERNING RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND INTERDISTRICT SCHOOL CHOICE.

Proposed H.B. No. 6077 - AN ACT CONCERNING HOUSING VOUCHERS FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN A SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM.

Proposed H.B. No. 5841 - AN ACT CONCERNING RENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR CERTAIN FAMILIES OF STUDENTS IN A SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAM.

Why do I support these bills? First, the 'Clean Slate' and 'Ban the Box' bills. It is recognized widely that an essential element for individuals seeking re-entry into society after incarceration is access to housing. This is true for any offense, but in particular for persons who have committed offenses of a sexual nature who have been placed on the Registry. The bills under consideration together provide a process to open up housing by preventing a person's criminal record to be accessed for misdemeanors and certain felonies after 7 years, as well as automatically sealing them. This is an essential step towards ending continuation of their punishment post incarceration through widely applied denials for housing. This is true for all individuals post-incarceration.

Secondly, 'School Choice' housing related bills. These bills, providing legal and financial support for families whose children are participating in school choice programs to move to the communities where their children attend school makes perfect sense. All would agree that for a child to live where they go to school improves their chance of success and educational achievement. They have more time, more access to programs, more opportunity to develop the social connections essential for a healthy childhood.

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.

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