

[REDACTED]

From: Lin Y [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2019 10:43 PM
To: HSGTestimony
Subject: opposition testimony to HB5713 and SB54
Attachments: opposition to HB5713 SB54 feb 2019.pdf

Honorable Housing Committee:

I am writing to oppose Bill SB54 and Bill HB5713 of Connecticut; in effect, both bills are intended to limit or prohibit the access of criminal background records for a prospective tenant by their potential landlords.

Inmates released from state prison have a re-arrest rate of 76.6% within 5 years (Bureau of Justice Statistic). Housing providers and communities thus need the ability to evaluate potential risk within this high-risk population. The threat will be disproportionately greater to urban, high-density residential areas, where the poor, the elderly, and minority communities tend to live. SB54 and HB5713 limit the basic rights to security for those most venerable in our society.

A similar "ban the box" approach has been implemented in employment for some years. The most controversial outcome has been an unintended negative impact on low-skill young people of color; since employers have no access to criminal records of potential applicants, they tend to avoid interviews with people of certain demographic groups that possess statistically high criminal offense rates (ref: NBER working paper No. 22469, by J. Doleac, B Hansen, issued in July 2016). In this manner, the "ban the box" policy, with its intent to reduce discrimination towards criminal offenders, instead propagates discrimination and greatly reduces the social mobility of disadvantaged groups.

On Jan 29, 2019, Canadian serial killer Bruce McArthur pleaded guilty to eight counts of first-degree murder against gay men of Southern Asian or Middle Eastern origin. Alarming, McArthur already had an assault conviction for acts against a gay man in 2003. However, at the height of his killing spree, his criminal record was erased from his background check (BBC news Feb 5th, 2019). Police actually interviewed McArthur in 2013 surrounding the disappearance of one of his victims, but as a witness, not a suspect. Had his previous conviction been known to the police and community, many innocent lives and the immeasurable pain of many families could have been spared.

Aside from their many practical failings, these bills currently proposed are also technically problematic: HB5713 fails to define how a landlord may act upon a person's criminal record after they are initially offered housing. Can a landlord still legally reject a violent criminal without the threat of discrimination allegations? Do landlords and communities lose the right to maintain their own security? SB54 proposes too broad a concept without specifics or guarantees.

For the preservation of safety and equality within our community, our state, and our nation, I strongly urge you to block Bills HB5713 and SB54 in the Housing Committee.

With best regards,

Lin Yang,

Woodbridge resident

Feb 6th, 2018