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Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
Monday, March 25, 2019

Good morning Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

> Committee Bill No. 504, An Act Concerning the Suspension of Delinquency Proceedings for Treatment or Other Services in Motor Vehicle Theft or Misuse Cases and Concerning Detention of Juveniles (**Proposed amendment**)
>
> Raised House Bill No. 7389, An Act Concerning Confidentiality in the Case of a Discretionary Transfer of a Juvenile's Case to the Regular Criminal Docket and Implementing the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (**Oppose Section 1 & 2**)

Crime victims in Connecticut have state constitutional and statutory rights to participate in the criminal justice process, including in juvenile delinquency proceedings.

Specifically, crime victims have a right to access records in a juvenile delinquency matter[1], to attend juvenile delinquency proceedings[2] and have a right to make a statement to the court concerning the disposition of the case.[3] Committee Bill No. 504 will allow the court to order an evaluation of a juvenile charged with a delinquency offense involving a motor vehicle theft to determine whether the juvenile would benefit from a suspension of the delinquency proceedings and participate in treatment or other services. As proposed, the court may order the suspension of the delinquency proceedings for up to one year and ultimately dismiss the charges without ever hearing from the victim regarding the impact that the crime has had on the victim, including whether the victim has incurred out-of-pocket expenses relating to the offense.

[1] C.G.S. § 46b-124a
[2] C.G.S. § 46b-122
[3] C.G.S. § 46b-138b

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To ensure the rights of crime victims are honored and respected, **the Office of the Victim Advocate requests that subsection (c) of Section 1 of Committee Bill No. 504 be amended to permit the victim of the offense to appear at the juvenile proceeding and make a statement to the court regarding the suspension of the delinquency proceedings.**

Likewise, Section 1 of Raised House Bill No. 7389 would require that any juvenile matter transferred to the regular criminal docket be private and confidential from other proceedings pertaining to adults charged with crimes. Juvenile matters transferred to the regular criminal docket are considered, for all intents and purposes, adult criminal proceedings, unless the matter has been designated to the youthful offender docket. Currently, crime victims have the right to attend youthful offender proceedings,[4] the right to access records in youthful offender matters[5] and the right to appear before the court and make a statement to the court regarding any plea agreement or sentence.[6]

As proposed, Section 1 would violate crime victims' constitutional and statutory rights and exclude crime victims from all matters transferred from the juvenile court to the regular criminal docket, unless the matter is designated to the youthful offender docket. Additionally, we should be mindful that as a general rule, and consistent with our state constitution,[7] courts should operate in openness and transparency. Therefore, I must strongly oppose Section 1 of Raised House Bill No. 7389.

Finally, Section 2 of Raised House Bill No. 7389 would prohibit any person under eighteen from being detained or incarcerated in any correctional facility operated by the Department of Correction, regardless of whether such person was convicted of an offense on the regular criminal docket. Currently crime victims may register to receive notification of an offender's incarceration status through the Department of Correction, Victim Services Unit. Victims receive notice of an offender's release and notice of various early release opportunities available to inmates. Such notifications allow victims to address safety or other concerns and prepare for the eventual release of an offender.

Unfortunately, the sad reality is that there are some juveniles that commit very dangerous and violent offenses, including murder and sexual assault. The state must have the ability to appropriately manage this population of violent offenders without jeopardizing victim and public safety. I strongly encourage the Committee to reject Section 2 of Raised House Bill No. 7389.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

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[4] C.G.S. § 54-76h
[5] C.G.S. § 54-76*l*
[6] C.G.S. § 54-76q
[7] Conn. Const. Art. I, § 10