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Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
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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 in **SUPPORT** of:

> Raised Senate Bill No. 964, An Act Concerning Court Operations
> Raised Senate Bill No. 970, An Act Concerning the Confidentiality of Evidence Seized in a Criminal Investigation

Section 1 of Raised Bill No. 964 would add victim services advocates employed by the Judicial Branch among those individuals listed as mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. Many of the judicial branch victim services advocates are social workers. This change will allow victim services advocates/social workers to be in compliance with the professional requirements of social workers. The Judicial Branch has assured me that this change will not compromise confidentiality concerning communications between victim services advocates and crime victims.

Section 14 of Raised Bill No. 964 would allow victims to seek reimbursement from the Office of Victim Services victim compensation program for attendance at juvenile hearings and the Board of Pardons and Paroles hearings. Currently, crime victims may seek reimbursement for attendance in adult court proceeding and should not face a financial hardship for exercising their rights to attend other similar hearings.

Raised Bill No. 970 will protect information and evidence collected in the course of a criminal investigation from the public view, unless such information or evidence is presented during the criminal trial process.

While it is critical for the public to have access to information regarding the actions of law enforcement and the courts, such information must be protected to maintain the integrity of criminal investigations. It should not be released unless such information is presented during the criminal trial process. Crime victims have a state constitutional right to be treated fairly and with respect throughout the criminal justice process. Crime victims should not have to worry about the media glorification of the killing of their loved one.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony. I urge the Committee's favorable report on Raised Senate Bill Nos. 964 & 970.

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