



TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE
LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE
SUPPORTING: H.B. No. 6921 AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION BASED ON A
PERSON'S CRIMINAL HISTORY
February 26, 2019

Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee: My name is Abby Anderson. I am the executive director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending the criminalization of Connecticut's children. We believe in prevention to keep children from entering the system, and best practice and policy to help kids who do enter the system to be successful.

We fully support proposed H.B. 6921, which would prohibit discrimination based on a person's criminal history. Though our work focuses on juvenile justice issues, we know that a parent's criminal history – and resulting inability to get high-quality education, employment, and housing – directly impacts children. These young people then do not have access to opportunities afforded to their peers, like safe neighborhoods, high-achieving schools, after-school and extra-curricular activities. When these options are limited, and children grow up in heavily policed neighborhoods, they are more likely to end up in the juvenile justice system – which leads to a higher chance of ending up in the adult justice system.

Ending discrimination against those with criminal records will have a multi-generational, community-wide impact. It will directly help those with criminal records. It will help their children, partners, and neighbors as they have better educational and career options, leading to more income and the ability to more fully contribute to and participate in their community.

We know that the criminal and juvenile justice systems disproportionately impact people of color and that a person's race is related to how systems treat them. A non-discrimination law like the one proposed will serve to begin the process of undoing some of the harm our mass incarceration policies have perpetrated.

Please note that even though juvenile justice records are “confidential,” there are still ways a juvenile record is used to discriminate against individuals, even years after their system involvement. Anti-discrimination legislation, if passed, should explicitly state that discrimination against those with criminal or juvenile records will not be tolerated.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I am happy to answer any questions and can be reached at abby@ctjja.org.

Alliance member organizations:

AFCAMP, Alliance for Children's Mental Health, Center for Children's Advocacy, CHDI, Connecticut Legal Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, Connecticut Youth Services Association, Community Partners in Action, FAVOR, LifeBridge, NAMI Connecticut, Office of the Chief Public Defender, Office of the Child Advocate, RYASAP, The Village for Families and Children, True Colors