One Standard of Justice, Inc. (OSJ) is 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.

To the co-chairs Senator Flexer, Representative Fox and the esteemed members of the GAE committee, thank you for the opportunity to express support for SB 233.

There are approximately 3,000 people serving time on parole in the state of Connecticut. It is the only state in New England NOT to give those on parole the right to vote.

As a member of OSJ I have participated with previously incarcerated individuals, especially those whose lives have been crippled by being placed on the Sex Offense Registry. I have listened to their stories of lost marriages, broken relationships, lost jobs or the difficulty of securing employment and not being able to provide for their families, and
the challenges of finding housing. I have personally experienced the bias from people who are stuck in what they have learned about sexual misconduct by a sensationalized media that perpetuates fear not fact.

To add another layer of punishment (for that is what the registry is) and prevent individuals on parole from exercising their constitutional right to vote is both unnecessary and another barrier to their returning to society and taking up the full measure of responsible citizenship. It further impedes social reintegration by making such people hold jobs, pay taxes, and yet not allowing them to represent themselves. As the founders said, “Taxation without representation is tyranny!”

It is time that Connecticut joined the rest of the New England states and provided the vote to those on parole. Maine and Vermont have never removed the right to vote from anyone except those convicted of voting law infractions. Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Hampshire retain the right to vote for those serving time on parole and probation.

Has this resulted in any detrimental consequences? No examples have been recorded that I am aware of. Rather, these states have enabled their citizens to be empowered to function as citizens, creating one standard of justice for all—not separate but equal. Equal under law.

We should, as a society, practice restorative justice and allow people returning to our (inclusive our) communities unencumbered opportunity to reclaim their dignity and encourage them to contribute to society completely, rather than excommunicate them from it.
These are the reasons One Standard of Justice enthusiastically supports SB233, “Unlock the Vote” and asks you to do the right thing. Say YES!