

CONNECTICUT ALLIANCE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Support. Advocate. Prevent.

Testimony on HB 5019, An Act Concerning Fair Futures Following Erasure of Criminal Records
And

SB 403 An Act Concerning the Board of Pardons and Paroles, Erasure of Criminal Records for Certain
Misdemeanor and Felony Offenses and Prohibiting Discrimination Based On Erased Criminal History
Record Information

Judiciary Committee

Asia Nhatavong, Justice-Involved Advocacy Coordinator

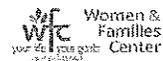
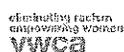
March 9, 2020

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Asia Nhatavong, and I am the Justice-Involved Advocacy Coordinator for the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence. The Alliance is the state's leading voice to end sexual violence and is a coalition of community-based sexual assault crisis services centers. Our mission is to create communities free of sexual violence and to provide culturally affirming, trauma-informed advocacy, prevention, and intervention services centered on the voices of survivors.

I am here to speak on the Governor's bill HB 5019, An Act Concerning Fair Futures Following Erasure of Criminal Records and the Judicial Committee's bill SB 403, An Act Concerning the Board and Pardons and Paroles, Erasure of Criminal Records for Certain Misdemeanor and Felony Offences and Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Erased Criminal History Record Information.

The Alliance supports these bills as written and greatly appreciates the Governor and the Committee for acknowledging perpetrators of sex crimes as different from individuals convicted of other types of crimes.

One of the many reasons I stand here before you today is to remind you all that sexual violence can impact anyone- including many of the exact people we are here today to give second chance to. We often talk about survivors of sexual violence and individuals with a criminal history as being two different people. But I want to take this time to highlight all the survivors of sexual violence that have also been directly impacted by our criminal justice system. In my role as the Justice-Involved Advocacy Coordinator, I advocate for the many survivors of sexual violence that are currently incarcerated and have been sexually assaulted while in DOC custody, as well as survivors that have been released and are now a part of an ever-growing reentry population who are only now ready to seek services. I advocate for all the



survivors whose history of sexual assault trauma far preceded their entry into the system and very well has created a direct pipeline into the criminal justice system.

Before I joined the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence, I worked in reentry for the City of New Haven Project Fresh Start Reentry Program. I've helped returning citizens apply for pardons, seek housing, write resumes, practice interviewing and apply for jobs. I've seen these individuals reinvent themselves and transform their lives and their communities despite all the barriers and challenges to their reintegration back into the community. As many of us in this room know very well- none of that can happen without so much struggle. The stories I've heard from both men and women who were vulnerable enough to share with me about what really paved their entrance into the criminal justice system are ones I carry with me every day. And I carry and remember them because far too many stories I've heard are the same stories of violence, abuse, and pain that I hear in my everyday work now as an advocate for survivors of sexual violence.

When US Department of Justice, NIJ research studies show that approximately 56% or more of adult men in our criminal justice system have suffered some kind of physical or sexual abuse before the age of 12¹ and up to 93% of girls in just one juvenile correction facility had already experienced sexual abuse, 76% of them before the age of 13²- we need to pay attention to how we support formerly incarcerated survivors and hold their perpetrators accountable.

Results from the Department of Justice's 2015 meta-analysis on sex offender recidivism rates show that the likelihood of re-offending and committing a new sex crime only increases over time. Recidivism rates for rapists are reported at 24% in a 15-year followup and increase to 39% after 25 years, post-sentencing. These rates are almost double that for child sexual abusers showing recidivism rates of up to 52% after 25 years, post-sentencing.³ Considering as well that most sexual assaults go unreported, we may also be able to assume that these rates are even higher than they are indicated here. The reason why CT has been able to keep our recidivism rates as low as they are is because of the constant multi-dimensional supervision of the sex offender supervision unit. The data continuously shows that this population is just different.

With that said- again, the Alliance strongly supports HB5019 and SB403 as written and appreciates the Governor's and Committee's support for including the voices of survivors of sexual violence in this important piece of legislation. Thank you for your time.

¹ Patterns of Victimization Among Male and Female Inmates: Evidence of an Enduring Legacy, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3793850/#R2>

²The sexual abuse to prison pipeline, <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/the-sexual-abuse-prison-pipeline> and The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story, http://rights4girls.org/wp-content/uploads/r4g/2015/02/2015_COP_sexual-abuse_layout_web-1.pdf

³ Department of Justice: Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking. "Sex Offender Management Assessment and Planning Initiative. July 2015"