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March 10, 2021

Dear Committee on HUMAN SERVICES,

My name is Hiram Fuchs and I am writing to comment on Raised H.B. No. 6562. I have been a Connecticut state marshal since 2012, and a member of the capias unit since 2014. I have direct knowledge of this system, and am offering my perspective on the direction I feel this committee should go.

I believe the state should create a task force to study child support-related issues, but I feel the scope of their work should go beyond just the technology related to the collection of monies. In my years serving these warrants I have come to believe that this system is fundamentally flawed.

The most significant issue, in my opinion, is the notion that a person can be arrested and jailed for owing money. I understand that a capias warrant is based on violating a judge's order, but in practice it amounts to a modern-day debtors' prison. Everyone on this committee should know that when an individual is arrested on a capias warrant they end up in the same jails as those accused of violent felonies. Most of our arrestees land at the Hartford Correctional Center, which is a Level 4 high-security facility.

The drive to jail is often a long one, and oftentimes an arrestee will tell us their story. What we hear is a recurring theme of drug and alcohol addiction, physical health problems, mental health issues, and criminal records that prevent meaningful employment. Many arrestees state that they want to pay but the debt has become so insurmountable they cannot make any headway. Ironically, when an individual is arrested they face losing their job when they don't show up to work the next day. This can be especially problematic when the arrested individual is the breadwinner for another family. Even arresting an individual for owed support is no guarantee that it will ever be paid. We once arrested the same individual three times in a six-month period. On his third arrest he stated that the second time we arrested him he spent two months in jail. His biggest concern going in this time was that he gets a top bunk.

The ability of the Court to arrest individuals who are in contempt is a powerful and necessary tool. What we need to move away from is the use of mass incarceration to try to solve this problem. I feel this committee should take a hard look at what this system costs Connecticut, both in real tax dollars and the impact it has on our population. We aren't the only state or the only country dealing with this. Maybe there is a better way to go.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Respectfully,

Hiram Fuchs
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Middlesex County