

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OPPOSING House Bill 6670 - AN ACT CONCERNING A MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCE FOR INJURY OR RISK OF INJURY OF A CHILD.**

**Position: Opposing**

*March 30, 2021*

Co-Chairs Sen. Winfield & Rep. Stafstrom, Vice Chairs Kasser & Blumenthal, Ranking Members Sen. Kissel & Rep. Fishbein, and esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Andre' L. McGuire, and I am a resident of Waterbury. I am a member of Restorative Action Alliance, Inc. (RAA), a regional advocacy group, and a voice for reform of the criminal legal system, advocating for restorative justice.

I am writing in opposition to House Bill 6670- AN ACT CONCERNING A MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCE FOR INJURY OR RISK OF INJURY OF A CHILD.

My personal experience is having seen the destruction caused particularly within communities of color by mandatory minimum sentencing laws. I firmly believe: "To protect children..." should be the aim of us all. Unfortunately, imposing any type of mandatory minimum will not accomplish that goal. It is for that reason that I am opposing this bill.

It has become clear that the establishment of mandatory minimum sentencing and 'three strikes' laws have had the unintended consequence of sending more people to prison in this country than any other nation in the world, while creating barriers to successful re-entry to society. Equally as unfortunate, we have found that the persons imprisoned due to these laws are disproportionately people of color and the poor.

In a time when we are recognizing that racism is a public health crisis, we need to be much more mindful of the consequences of laws which fail to meet the purpose for which they are written i.e. protecting children. At the same time, we must not perpetuate a system, which has through public policy and legislation undermined the wording of the constitution of the United States, "That all men are created equal".

Removing the courts discretion in any case is a denial of justice. Every individual deserves to be examined and judged based on their own positive and/or negative actions. The fair and impartial aspect of the judicial system is removed when we remove the courts discretion to review information brought forth through pre-sentence investigations.

Instead of pouring money into a broken system, we must reduce the cycle of harm and protect children by investing in education, support for individuals who have been harmed, and through the provision of the many resources that are so absent from highly impacted communities. Again, this bill would not reduce potential harm, it would simply continue to feed mass incarceration through "unintended" racist effects.

I therefore, **VEHEMENTLY OPPOSE** this bill and ask the committee to vote against it.

