

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 Jason Wasserman, and I am a resident of South Windsor and President of Restorative Action Alliance, Inc. (RAA), a regional advocacy group made up of anti-carceral crime survivors, individuals who have been impacted by the criminal legal system, and restorative justice advocates and practitioners.

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*

The past month, there have been hearings where a few representatives have argued that mass incarceration isn't a problem in this state simply because the number of individuals incarcerated has been dropping over the past decade. However, our state still incarcerates people at a higher rate than other civilized nations. Prison and jail should be the last resort, not the first method of defense against harm. And this bill, would ensure additional people would be swept up into the carceral system.

Here, with this bill, the state would be imposing guaranteed prison time on anyone convicted of this specific type of crime. No rational person likes to see children injured, but this bill would do nothing to protect them. It would simply remove the ability for a judge to consider any mitigating factors or assess the level of risk associated with allowing an individual to remain in the community. It could potentially cause more harm and inflict additional pain on families. If the ultimate goal is to reduce harm, legislation as proposed in this bill isn't the answer.

There is no evidence to support the idea that mandatory prison time would act as a deterrent. However, even a short time in prison has the potential to impede the healing process, not only for the person who harmed, but also for the person who was harmed. Sometimes, prison is the least effective and most harmful way to address a problem. This bill would make it impossible to explore any other options.

I strongly oppose this bill and ask you to vote against it.

