



Testimony of
Carlos Moreno, State Director
Connecticut Working Families Organization

March 10, 2021

To the honorable Chairman Winfield, Chairman Stafstrom, Vice Chairs Kasser and Blumenthal, and Ranking members Kissel and Fishbein, and all of the members of the Judiciary committee.

Thank you for holding this hearing.

My name is Carlos Moreno. I live in Cornwall, CT and I'm the State Director of the Connecticut Working Families Organization, an anti-racist, progressive political organization that builds power for working people.

We stand in full support for **SB 1019: An Act Concerning The Board Of Pardons And Paroles, Erasure Of Criminal Records For Certain Misdemeanor And Felony Offenses, Prohibiting Discrimination Based On Erased Criminal History Record Information And Concerning The Recommendations Of The Connecticut Sentencing Commission With Respect To Misdemeanor Sentences.**

We support the proposed legislation in its entirety, but would like to draw attention to the provision of the bill detailing the recommendations of the sentencing commission with respect to misdemeanor sentences.

Connecticut's one-year maximum sentence for class A misdemeanors creates drastic, disproportionate consequences for non-citizens, turning state misdemeanors into A "aggravated felonies" under federal law. For example, a green card holder convicted of shoplifting for the first time can face deportation, despite never serving a day in jail.

SB1019 would reduce the maximum sentence of all misdemeanor convictions in Connecticut to 364 days, which will help many community members avoid immigration detention and deportation after their release from state custody.

Misdemeanor sentencing reform would:

- Disentangle at least one part of our state systems from a cruel deportation regime
- Diminish the cycle of mass incarceration that disproportionately impacts people of color

- Allow immigration judges greater discretion to consider the totality of the circumstances in considering applications for immigration relief

Connecticut cannot allow unjust laws at the federal level to tear our people away from their families and communities. Funneling individuals from our own deeply problematic criminal justice system into a highly punitive immigration system runs counter to public safety, peace, and common notions of justice and fairness.

Thank you to members of the Judiciary Committee for holding this important hearing today.