



State of Connecticut
DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

TESTIMONY OF THE DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

IN SUPPORT OF:

S.B. No. 6 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
March 24, 2021

The Division of Criminal Justice supports S.B. 6, An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Criminal Justice Reforms, and respectfully recommends the Committee's JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT.

Specifically, the Division supports the expansion of § 46b-15 to include patterns of coercive control in Section 1. Not all domestic abuse is physical. Non-physical behaviors, such as threats, humiliation, control over finances, and isolation from friends and/or family, can be just as damaging to the victim as physical violence. As such, the Division supports the proposed expansion to protect these victims. The Division also supports the concept of providing pro bono services to indigent domestic abuse victims seeking such civil restraining orders.

In addition, the Division strongly supports the revisions to the hate crime statutes in Sections 15, 16, and 17. The proposed revision to these statutes makes it clear that the State must prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the defendant's conduct was "motivated in whole or in substantial part" by the defendant's hate or bias, and not that it was the sole motivating factor. To be clear, the proposed language would not be novel to our state, as other states – such as New York, California, Illinois, Kansas, Tennessee, and Wisconsin – utilize similar language in their hate crime statutes. This proposal would aid the Division in prosecuting hate crimes, which is of particular import if this legislature passes S.B. 122, creating a Hate Crimes and Extremist Group Investigative Unit within the State Police.

In conclusion, the Division of Criminal Justice supports S.B. 6 and respectfully recommends the Committee's JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT. We thank the Committee for affording this opportunity to provide input on this matter and would be happy to provide any additional information the Committee might require or to answer any questions that you might have.