HB 5390: An Act Repealing Statutory Provisions That Impose Liability On An Individual For Repayment Of Costs Incurred When The Individual Was Incarcerated
By Brian K Sullivan Sr.

Hello Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Senator Kissel, Representative Fishbein and all of the distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Brian K Sullivan Sr. and I am a Smart Justice Leader with the ACLU. I am also a proud resident of Hartford, a father of four children, a student, a taxpayer, and a person who strongly believes in accountability, equality and fairness. Today, I am testifying in full support of House Bill 5390, An Act Repealing Statutory Provisions That Impose Liability On An Individual For Repayment Of Costs Incurred When The Individual Was Incarcerated. I support this bill because people who have served their time and paid their debt to society have completed their sentence, Period. It is wrong, unjust and oppressive to attempt to charge people for the prison debt.

I was incarcerated here in Connecticut for over 31 years. While incarcerated I became driven to do anything and everything it took to change who I was into a Man I could look in the mirror and be proud of. I availed myself of every program in the DOC and always held a job. I became one of the first hospice volunteers in the state and sat bed side with 20 men whose last breath was in a cell. That experience strengthened my resolve that, if the opportunity ever presented itself outside of prison, I would apply the same value and hard work that I did while in prison. I've been home since 2019. Anyone who knows me knows that I work extremely hard and stay positive – but the past two years have been a challenge. Despite my work ethic and attitude, the great references that I have, my criminal record continues to be held against me. On top of all of that, I have this prison debt hanging over me and a risk of being sued by the state of Connecticut.

If the state charged me nearly $90,000 per year, that would be around $2.7 million – and I could potentially be sued for half of that, or nearly $1.3 million roughly. That is a staggering number, it is almost unfathomable. When I try to explain it to people, they don't believe me. That Connecticut would try to charge people for each day they spent in prison after they've been released is not only morally wrong, it disproportionately targets and Black and Latino residents that will haunt them and their families long after their deaths. I want to be able to pass along what I've earned in my life to my children to help them be successful in their lives. They should not be vulnerable and have to suffer from my incarceration.

Once people have earned the chance to be part of society after incarceration, they should have the opportunity to support themselves and their families. HB 5390 will end an excessively punitive and unfair practice and give members of our society a fair and equal chance to lead successful lives.

Thank you for listening to my testimony today.