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OSJ is a volunteer-based civil rights organization committed to ensuring that persons accused or convicted of sexual offenses in Connecticut are treated constitutionally and fairly by the state before, during, and after their sentences. We believe communities are safer with rational laws and with a focus on prevention of sexual harm and the healing of all those affected by it. We believe any sexual offense is one too many.

SB 254 – An Act Requiring Long-Term Care Facility Residents to Undergo a Criminal History and Sexual Offender Registry Search.

Good afternoon,

My name is Cindy Prizio, and I am executive director of One Standard of Justice, an organization that stands up for fair and equitable treatment of those in our community burdened with great stigma and injustice. We request that those who have committed sexual offenses, as well as the survivor/victims of those offenses benefit from best practices based on sound research guided by democratic principles.

Today, I am speaking in opposition to SB 254, “An Act Requiring Long-Term Care Facility Residents to Undergo a Criminal History and Sexual Offender Registry Search.”

In other chambers of this assembly, bills are being considered that recognize the right to housing for every Connecticut resident. But this bill excludes many of Connecticut’s most vulnerable from necessary supportive housing and care: its elderly, its infirm. The criminal offense could have taken place fifty years ago in the applicant’s past; no matter, this bill will stamp that applicant disqualified.

Individuals who are, or have been, on the Sex Offense Registry are specifically targeted. The CT registry is based on category of offense not risk. The experts agree that the vast majority of these people have made a mistake and are one-time offenders, so don’t treat them like a “sex offender.” Senior residents who have a conviction for a sexual offense in their past, have worked hard to overcome state-imposed barriers to reintegrate into society and are statistically less likely to commit a sexual offense than the general population. Many have been less successful at reintegration than they might have been without such harsh restrictions by the state.

Let’s look at facts:

- The Association for Community Living (ACL) reviewed 20,000 complaints of sexual abuse in nursing homes over the past 20 years and found none of these cases, ZERO, were perpetrated by individuals on the Registry.

- A 2006 study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that although 0.7% of people on the registry live in assisted living facilities, only one instance of a sexual assault was attributed to a person on the registry.

95% of new sex crimes will be committed by people not on a registry, i.e. they are unknown to us and may not have a criminal record. Additionally, we recommend that you review R. Karl Hanson's research on desistance: *Long-Term Recidivism Studies Show That Desistance Is the Norm*. We also included the link to Dr. Hanson's webinar co-sponsored by One Standard of Justice and Senator Winfield: *Sex Offense Recidivism Risk: Not What You Think*.

Although for many with conviction histories rejection is automatic, SB 254 burdens the Department of Public Health with the process of adjudicating appeals. Do we expect the department to act as criminologists and therapists? Will it be able to impartially evaluate appeals made from a variety of cultural and educational backgrounds? Who is to write appeals for those who are not mentally competent to represent themselves?

Equally problematic is the only alternative offered to rejected applicants: they can apply to a facility with "a mission to serve justice-impacted populations". How many beds exist at these hypothetical facilities? Individuals without an option to address their physical and medical needs are expected to suffer in silence, possibly finding themselves homeless.

SB 254 is a public policy disaster in the making. Please don't allow one sensational crime to turn good intentions into bad policy. We all want to protect our vulnerable populations. OSJ stands ready to provide help to the committee in developing an effective solution.

I strongly urge the committee to reject SB 254. It's misguided attack on Connecticut's vulnerable populations will create a public health crisis for the State.

Thank you for your time.

Paper: *Long-Term Recidivism Studies Show That Desistance Is the Norm*

<https://onestandardofjustice.org/Hanson-2018-CJB-Desistance.pdf>

Webinar: *Sex Offense Recidivism Risk: Not What You Think*

<https://onestandardofjustice.org/sex-offense-recidivism-risk-not-what-you-think/>