

WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUPPORTING Senate Bill 1194- An Act Relieving Certain Registrants of the Requirements of the Sex Offense Registry and Clarifying Registration Requirements for Persons Transferred into this State and Who Reside in Congregate Care Settings

March 13, 2023

Co-Chairs Sen. Winfield & Rep. Stafstrom; Vice Chairs Sen. Flexer and Rep. Quinn, Ranking Members Sen. Kissel & Rep. Fishbein; and esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Jason Wasserman, I am President of the Board of Restorative Action Alliance, a group of anti-carceral crime survivors, individuals impacted by the criminal legal system, and restorative advocates and practitioners; I am also a Connecticut resident. I am writing to you today to express my support for Senate Bill 1194 - An Act Relieving Certain Registrants of the Requirements of the Sex Offense Registry and Clarifying Registration Requirements for Persons Transferred into this State and Who Reside in Congregate Care Settings

The sex offense registry is a highly emotional topic. The registry in its current form was enacted back in the late '90s with the promise of improving public safety. The underlying premise was that if people knew that someone was in their neighborhood who had previously been convicted of a sex offense, then they would be able to take measures to protect themselves. That premise is flawed as the sex offense registry has not made our communities safer and yet it has created a wide set of new problems.

Specifically related to this bill, hundreds of people remain on the registry today who were convicted prior to the implementation of the registry and who have not committed another offense for over 25 years. The youngest of these people would now be in their mid-forties. Reputable studies have shown that individuals with past sex convictions who remain crime-free for a number of years have the same risk profile as the population of individuals who have never been convicted and that people age out of crime.

Conviction registries in general are failed public policy in that they do not improve public safety, yet they cost taxpayer funds to implement. Meanwhile, they have done irreparable harm to families, including the children, parents and spouses of people forced to register. The punishments are seemingly endless with people unable to secure employment and having significant limitations on their housing. For individuals who have been lucky enough to overcome some of the barriers, they are faced with perpetual isolation and shaming for themselves and their families. Some have reported being unable to obtain a credit card and others have shared that their banks have closed their accounts simply because of their status on the registry. Parents and grandparents have been prohibited from attending school functions. Children with parents on the registry have been targeted for abuse by their peers and mistreated by teachers and school administration. Individuals have been stalked, harassed, and killed by vigilantes.



Keeping people on the registry satisfies societal lust for extracting maximum punishment from a disliked segment of the population. However, state-sanctioned permanent punishment does nothing to alleviate the pain that was caused by the initial harm. It does nothing to promote healing for the person who was harmed. If anything, it creates a sense of hopelessness for the individuals who were convicted, which could actually lead to decrease in public safety.

Back in 1999, over 24 years ago, when the sex offense registry as we know it today was established in Connecticut, most people didn't even own computers. It was a different era. In 2023, ample evidence now exists to demonstrate that sex offense registries do great harm and very little good. Restorative Action Alliance can provide references to additional resources now, or as the bill progresses, upon request. The studies and legal cases supporting elimination of the sex offense registry continue to grow.

Senate Bill 1194 begins to undo some of the harm done by providing registration relief to the group of individuals convicted before registries were implemented. I support this bill and request the committee to vote in favor of it.

