



State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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S.B. No. 403

An Act Concerning The Board Of Pardons And Paroles, Erasure Of Criminal Records For Certain Misdemeanor And Felony Offenses And Prohibiting Discrimination Based On Erased Criminal History Record Information.

Testimony of Christine Perra Rapillo, Chief Public Defender

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports *Senate Bill 403, An Act Concerning the Board of Pardons and Paroles, Erasure of Criminal Records for Certain Misdemeanor and Felony Offenses and Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Erased Criminal History Record Information.*

This is a wide ranging proposal that would make great strides in eliminating the stigma attached to a criminal conviction. Educating the Board of Pardons and Parole on the collateral consequences of criminal convocations, allowing for erasure of criminal records and prohibiting discrimination based on erased records will help individuals with criminal convictions more easily rebound from past mistakes. This proposal will help individuals obtain employment, housing, loans and education, all markers for successful reentry after a period of incarceration or probation supervision. The proposal provides for a seven year waiting period for erasure of misdemeanors and a provisional erasure after twelve years for certain felonies.

This proposal also includes language proposed by the Connecticut Sentencing Commission that would automatically erase most misdemeanor records of 16 and 17 year-olds prior to the effective dates of the Raise the Age legislation. These are records from minor cases that

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would have gone to the juvenile court and created no records for the youth after 2010 or 2012. This proposal is consistent with the provisions and goals of the Raise the Age legislation and has the support of the members of the Sentencing Commission.

This is bold legislation. It recognizes that individuals who have previously been convicted of a crime are able to rehabilitate and successfully integrate in to communities. Individuals from our poor communities are the most impacted by the criminal justice system. Convictions make it difficult to find housing, jobs or to climb out of poverty. Providing for automatic erasure after a set period of time, gives a person the opportunity to live, work and flourish unimpeded by the stigma of a past criminal record. The Office of Chief Public Defender supports the idea of automatic erasure of criminal records and would welcome the chance to work with this Committee and other stakeholders to create a fair and workable process to help individuals avoid recidivism in exchange for an opportunity to restart a better life with a clean record.