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Testimony Submitted for the **Criminal Justice Commission Chief State's Attorney Search Meeting**

My name is Becky Simonsen, and I am a Lead Organizer with the Service Employees International Union District 1199 New England. Our union represents about 26,000 health care workers across the public and private sector in Connecticut. Our members work in nursing homes, hospitals, state human services, group homes, mental health services, and at home. They take care of children, the elderly, those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, individuals with mental illnesses, and individuals who are incarcerated. The majority of our members are women of color and many are from immigrant communities.

Connecticut, like every other state in this nation, disproportionately arrests and incarcerates Black and brown people, which disproportionately harms our members' families and communities. Because of this, SEIU District 1199 New England urges the Criminal Justice Commission to conduct a robust search for the next Chief State's Attorney. We urge your commission to find someone who will publicly commit to using their role to end mass incarceration and eliminate racial disparities in the criminal legal system.

We encourage the Criminal Justice Commission to develop requirements for all possible candidates to have demonstrated experience and commitment to decarceration and racial justice. All candidates should commit to decreasing incarceration and racial disparities in Connecticut's legal system and they should provide a detailed roadmap of how they will advance racial justice through decarceration and eliminating racial disparities. All candidates should be required to answer concrete questions about their plans for prosecutorial transparency and accountability, including prosecutorial guidelines and which metrics the candidate would use to institute performance reviews for prosecutors.

The only candidates that should be considered for the Chief State's Attorney position should have a history working explicitly to advance racial justice, be unequivocally committed to decrease incarceration and racial disparities, and provide the Criminal Justice Commission with detailed, specific plans on how they

plan to use the Office of the Chief State's Attorney to combat racial injustices in the criminal legal system.

Connecticut has sought to become a "Second Chance Society." Yet only five states are worse than Connecticut when it comes to disproportionately imprisoning Black adults. And only seven states are worse than Connecticut when it comes to disproportionately imprisoning Latino adults. Connecticut can get closer to our vision of a "Second Chance Society" by appointing a Chief State's Attorney that will actively use their office to reverse the destruction that our discriminatory practices have caused on Black and brown communities, and be a leader in advancing a vision for a more equitable and just Connecticut.