



State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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Testimony of Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel Office of Chief Public Defender

Judiciary Committee - March 25, 2022

Raised S.B. No. 447 - An Act Concerning a Study of the Criminal Laws of this State

Raised H.B. No. 5471 - An Act Concerning a Study of Criminal Procedure Laws of this State

Mission Statement of the Division of Public Defender Services

Striving to ensure justice and a fair and unbiased system, the Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services zealously promotes and protects the rights, liberty and dignity of all clients entrusted to us. We are committed to holistic representation that recognizes clients as individuals, fosters trust and prevents unnecessary and wrongful convictions.

The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports *S.B. No. 447, An Act Concerning a Study of the Criminal Laws of this State* and *Raised H.B. No. 5471, An Act Concerning a Study of Criminal Procedure Laws of this State*. OCPD requests that the Chief Public Defender be added to the membership of both groups as they carry out their charge to study the criminal laws and criminal procedures of this state. OCPD requests your consideration of including the Division of Criminal Justice in the membership of both groups as well.

The Division of Public Defender Services is a state agency that represents indigent accused in any criminal action, extradition proceeding, or delinquency matter. As a result, OCPD is able to provide a unique perspective of the criminal justice system, the penal code, and criminal procedure due to its substantial experience in the Connecticut courts.

In addition, OCPD's viewpoint can provide insight into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to the courts, including the daily dockets, the constitutional right to counsel, and those areas where change is needed. For these reasons, OCPD supports these bills and requests inclusion to assist the group as it navigates the criminal justice system in an effort to adhere to the existing state and federal constitutional safeguards while assuring public safety.