



State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

Office of Chief Public Defender

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

Judiciary Committee - March 21, 2022

Raised Bill 5 - An Act Concerning Online Dating Operations, Online Child Grooming and Harassment, Domestic Violence Training and Protections for Victims of Family Violence and Domestic Violence

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.

While the Office of Chief Public Defender takes no position on Sections 1-4 and 6 through 27, this office has serious concerns regarding **Section 5 of Raised Bill 5, An Act Concerning Online Dating Operations, Online Child Grooming and Harassment, Domestic Violence Training and Protections for Victims of Family Violence and Domestic Violence.**

Section 5 would create the offense of "grooming." This has been a topic of discussion at the Trafficking in Persons Council, chaired by Representative Jillian Gilchrist. Although a very broad proposal was not recommended by the Council this past year, ongoing conversations were encouraged. As a member of the Council and because this office provides representation in child protection proceedings, we instead suggest the creation of a working group tasked with creating legislation that is agreed to by all the stakeholders who have successfully collaborated previously on the trafficking legislation, *P.A. 21-103, An Act Concerning Human Trafficking*. In addition to this office, this working group could include the CT Criminal Defense Lawyers

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Association, the Division of Criminal Justice, and other stakeholders, including Love 146. Also, the CBA Committee on Human Trafficking is a wonderful resource that worked successfully on the vacatur statute which was adopted in P.A. 21-103.

The Office of Chief Public Defender urges this Committee not to act favorably on Section 5 as drafted but to create a working group to recommend a proposal for the 2023 session.