



**DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES**  
**State of Connecticut**

OFFICE OF CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER  
55 FARMINGTON AVENUE, 8<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
HARTFORD, CT 06105

ATTORNEY TASHUN BOWDEN-LEWIS  
CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER  
TEL: (860) 509-6429  
FAX: (860) 509-6499

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

**Judiciary Committee – March 8, 2023  
Raised H.B. 6737 - An Act Establishing the Crime of  
Harmful Communication with a Minor**

The Office of Chief Public Defender urges the Committee not to support **Raised H.B. 6737 - An Act Establishing the Crime of Harmful Communication with a Minor**. The bill creates a new class A misdemeanor. The proposal is not necessary as current law already penalizes persons for placing minors at risk of physical danger or in situations in which their health is likely to be injured or their morals “likely impaired.” See *C.G.S. 53-21, Injury or risk of injury to, or impairing morals, of, children. Sale of children*. Depending upon the age of the child, a person could be subject to being charged with a class C (incarceration up to 10 years) or B felony (incarceration up to 20 years with some mandatory minimum sentence time).

In addition, the definitions contained in this proposal are overbroad and vague. The definition of “inappropriate relationship” defines it as one that is “patently offensive to prevailing standards” without defining whose standards are applicable. Lines must be drawn, but this definition does not acknowledge or accommodate the cultural differences that exist among people. The demographic of the class being utilized to judge another class which may differ by race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification and other protected classes may not represent accurately the prevailing standards as a whole. The same holds true for the definition of “harmful to the minor” in citing the “patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community” language.

---

***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 recognizes the importance of this issue. Thus, this office respectfully requests that this subject matter be referred to the Connecticut Sentencing Commission. The Sentencing Commission is already studying potential changes to the Trafficking statutes at the request of the Trafficking in Persons Council. Referring this topic, including the subject of grooming, would be consistent with the current activity of the Commission. Alternatively, the Committee could create a working group to study this. This office believes that working together, either the members of the Sentencing Commission or a working group, representative of the stakeholders in the criminal justice system would be best to study and propose recommendations regarding this issue. Therefore, this office requests that the Committee take no action on this bill. Thank you.