



DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES
State of Connecticut

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Testimony of the Office of Chief Public Defender
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Raised S.B. 1071 – An Act Concerning Deceptive or Coercive Interrogation Tactics

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports **Raised S.B. 1071, An Act Concerning Deceptive or Coercive Interrogation Tactics (LCO 4381)**. The bill would ban the use of such deceptive tactics during interrogations conducted by law enforcement and reduce the risks of false confessions and wrongful convictions. This office has worked over the last few years on this proposal and urges the Committee to vote favorably on this.

Current law permits law enforcement to knowingly lie, promise leniency, or threaten the imposition of stiffer penalties if a person being interrogated, including a child, does not cooperate. During an interrogation, law enforcement can knowingly relay inaccurate facts or give false evidence to the person or child regarding any evidence which may, or may not, exist or link the person or child to the crime. These tactics have resulted in false confessions and resulted in people, including children, being wrongfully convicted of offenses they did not commit.

Wrongful convictions cost innocent persons years of their lives and the lives of their families. A wrongfully convicted person can spend years, if not decades, trying to reverse their conviction and prove their innocence. In addition, wrongful convictions substantially impact upon the victims of the offense who believed that the defendant was guilty, when in reality the real perpetrator has not been apprehended.

Wrongful convictions have cost Connecticut substantial financial resources to defend itself as an innocent person pursues post-conviction relief. Once exonerated, the innocent person can seek

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.

compensation from Connecticut, again a substantial cost to the state. **According to the NY Innocence Project and the ACLU of Connecticut, compensation to those wrongfully convicted here exceeded \$37.5 million. Millions of dollars more are paid in civil suit settlements.** This financial cost is in addition to the real cost: **the destruction of and impact upon the lives of the innocent person, their families, and the victims and their families. Meanwhile, the real perpetrator remains free.**

Nationally and in Connecticut there are true stories of innocent people wrongfully convicted and incarcerated for years based on faulty evidence obtained using deceptive tactics. In **Connecticut** there are 7 people who were wrongfully convicted after giving a false confession and who have spent years in prison. One of them was a child:

- **Bobby Johnson** was a 16-year-old child when he was interrogated multiple times by law enforcement and threatened with the death penalty and false evidence. **After being convicted of a 2006 murder in New Haven, he was exonerated after being incarcerated for 8 years.**

Deceptive tactics have not yet been abandoned in Connecticut. Other states, such as California, Delaware, Illinois, Oregon and Utah, have adopted similar bills to ban such practices.

The Office of Chief Public Defender thanks the Committee for raising this important bill and strongly urges it to vote favorably on this bill. Thank you.