



DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES
State of Connecticut

OFFICE OF CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER
55 FARMINGTON AVENUE, 8TH 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

Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement
February 16, 2023 Public Hearing

S.B. No. 923 – An Act Prohibiting the Consideration of Criminal History During the Admissions Process at an Institution of Higher Education or Private Career School or by an Educational or Apprenticeship Program

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports passage of **SB 923, An Act Prohibiting the Consideration of Criminal History During the Admissions Process at an Institution of Higher Education or Private Career School or by an Educational or Apprenticeship Program**. The bill would require that college and technical schools **not** ask potential students about any prior arrests or convictions. In addition, the bill would require that such not be considered when the student is applying for admission or financial aid, including a grant or scholarship. Current inquiries for such information discriminate against persons who have completed their sentence and have thus “paid their debt to society” or who have been arrested for a misdemeanor or a felony at any time regardless of how many years have passed since.

Connecticut provides access to college-level studies to certain incarcerated inmates. Rehabilitation has always been a goal of the criminal justice system. Re-entry efforts and support focus on providing persons who have served their sentence an opportunity to contribute to their communities. This bill would “ban the box” or “ban the beyond box” as it is sometimes referred to. The bill would eliminate the inquiry that occurs when a person is arrested or convicted for a misdemeanor (such as breach of peace, criminal trespass or

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.

larceny) or a felony (such as simple possession of certain substances) regardless of how much time has passed between the arrest or conviction and the application. Perpetuating this prohibition only results in paralyzing a person and stripping them of any hope to re-enter the community and advance. Therefore, this Office respectfully asks that this Committee vote favorably on this bill. Thank you.