



State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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**Testimony of the Office of Chief Public Defender
Robert Meredith, Director of CT Innocence Project / Post Conviction Unit**

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE - MARCH 18, 2024

Raised Bill No. 439

AN ACT CONCERNING COMPENSATION FOR PERSONS WHO ARE WRONGFULLY INCARCERATED

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports *Raised Bill No. 439, An Act Concerning Compensation For Persons Who Are Wrongfully Incarcerated.*

The Connecticut Innocence Project (CTIP), first formed in the summer of 2005, is an office within the Office of Chief Public Defender in the Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services. In 2007, the Connecticut legislature granted funding for the Connecticut Innocence Project. CTIP is now combined with the Post Conviction Unit within the Office of Chief Public Defender. As a member of the Innocence Network, a coalition of Innocence Projects in fifty states and abroad, CTIP investigates cases of wrongfully convicted individuals and seeks their exoneration. Since 1989, there have been thirty-six (36) exonerations in the state of Connecticut, resulting in 486 years of lost life. The years of wrongful incarceration and lost life has had an obviously devastating impact on each exoneree. This office fully supports the proposed changes in this bill regarding compensation for individuals who have been wrongfully incarcerated in the past, the present, and the future.

This office notes, however, that the bill is effective from passage and applicable only to claims filed on or after the effective date of the bill. In *fairness*, this office believes that this proposal, if adopted by the Committee, **should be applied retroactively** so that persons with pending claims are compensated similarly. Therefore, this office respectfully requests that the Committee vote that the bill be applied "retroactivity" and vote favorably on the remainder of the bill. Thank you for your consideration.