



State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE - March 16, 2026

Raised Bill No. 343

AN ACT CONCERNING FEES CHARGED FOR CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORDS CHECKS

The Office of Chief Public Defender **supports** **Raised Bill 343, An Act Concerning Fees Charged for Criminal History Records Checks**. The bill would *prohibit* the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) and any independent contractor with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) from charging a convenience, processing, distribution, or electronic preregistration fee to any pardon applicant determined indigent by the Commissioner of DESPP. The amendment would be consistent with current statutory waivers of such fees if certain records were requested of DESPP by a person determined to be indigent. ¹

¹ P.A. 21-32, **An Act Concerning the Board of Pardons and Paroles, Erasure of Criminal Records for Certain Misdemeanor and Felony Offenses, Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Erased Criminal History Record Information and Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission With Respect to Misdemeanor Sentences**. See *Section 7 – Waiver of fee by State Police for criminal history records for applicants for a pardon; and, June S.S. P.A. 21-2, An Act Concerning Provisions Related to Revenue and Other Items to Implement the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023*. See *Section 84 – DESPP waiver criminal history record search fee of \$75 for pardon applicant*.

As a state agency since 1975, this agency represents indigent persons accused of an offense in criminal pretrial and post-conviction matters. The bill is also consistent with the support of the Connecticut Legislature through the years for the waiver of fees for persons who are indigent in pretrial and post-conviction proceedings or who have sought information pursuant to the Freedom of Information statutes.²

The amount of documentation a pardon applicant is required to obtain and put together can be a daunting task for anyone, especially if indigent. Obtaining the information and making copies of such takes time, and the costs for copying can be difficult for some to pay for. If indigent, obtaining one's criminal history records could be delayed indefinitely.

As a result, this bill would greatly assist those applicants by waiving the fee associated with obtaining certain criminal history records. This office requests that the Committee *vote favorably* on this legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

² P.A. 21-32, **An Act Concerning the Board of Pardons and Paroles, Erasure of Criminal Records for Certain Misdemeanor and Felony Offenses, Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Erased Criminal History Record Information and Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission With Respect to Misdemeanor Sentences.** See Section 3 – *Waiver of fee for Petition for Erasure.*; P.A. 21-102, **An Act Concerning the Criminal Justice Process.** See Sections 11-18 – *Waiver of diversionary program fees for persons determined indigent*; June S.S. PA 21-1, **An Act Concerning Responsible and Equitable Regulation of Adult-Use Cannabis (RERACA).** See Section 8 - *no fee to file Petition for Erasure*; and Sections 166-167 – *no program fee for persons applying for the new drug and alcohol diversionary programs and*, C.G.S. 1-212, **Copies and scanning of public records. Fees.** See Section (d) – *waiver of fees for an indigent person.*