



State of Connecticut

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Testimony of Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel

Government Administration and Elections Committee Public Hearing March 9, 2021

Senate Bill 5318 An Act Restoring Electoral Privileges to Convicted Felons Who Are on Parole

The Office of Chief Public Defender strongly supports passage of *Senate Bill 5318, An Act Restoring Electoral Privileges to Convicted Felons Who Are on Parole*. Because a person on parole is technically still under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections following release from incarceration, this office suggests that the following language be inserted:

Line 7 conviction and once such person has [~~been discharged from confinement, and, if applicable, parole.~~] served the executed portion of their sentence.

The insertion of this language would leave no doubt that once a person physically walks out of a correctional facility, they can vote, even if they are on parole.

Because custody includes confinement and time on parole supervision, individuals who have been released or discharged into the community but are still under parole supervision currently do not have the right to vote. Individuals who are convicted of a felony but have been released to probation are not in the custody of the Department of Corrections and are able to exercise their electoral privilege. As a member of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission, which has considered this concept, the Chief Public Defender has always supported the restoration of voting rights to persons on parole.

Testimony of Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel

March 9, 2021 - Government Administration and Elections Committee Public Hearing

RE: S.B. 5318 - An Act Restoring Electoral Privileges to Convicted Felons Who Are on Parole

In addition to electoral disenfranchisement, there are numerous collateral consequences that result from a conviction. These collateral consequences can result in, among other hurdles, substantial difficulty in obtaining employment and housing. The current statutory prohibition against permitting parolees the right to vote as they reenter their community does not assist a parolee in their reintegration into the community. Instead it continues to disenfranchise them.

Connecticut is a leader in providing substantial rehabilitation and treatment services to persons arrested and convicted of criminal offenses and believes in giving persons so convicted a second chance. Such a focus makes sense socially and economically, as the vast majority of people who are incarcerated do eventually return to the community. Although this bill pertains only to parolees, this office hopes that there will be a continued conversation regarding the restoration of voting rights to all persons, regardless of such persons' being convicted and incarcerated. This office requests that this bill receive a favorable report from this Committee. Thank you for your consideration.