



September 13, 2022
Robert Hotaling
PO Box 1093
Cheshire, CT
06410

Dear Mr. Hotaling,

It has come to our attention that you may be pursuing the opportunity to assume the role of Connecticut's next Governor. Thank you for taking a step to advance your role in ensuring all people in Connecticut have an equitable opportunity to thrive!

The ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC is a political action committee with the purpose of building the necessary relationships, public awareness, public narratives, and pressure felt by politicians in order to build the political power of people directly impacted by civil rights and liberties issues. At our core, is a foundational belief that we cannot have a thriving Connecticut until our state actively promotes and invests in racial justice.

The ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC is a new tool that will enable people directly impacted by civil rights and civil liberties issues to hold currently and would-be elected officials accountable to promises made on the campaign trail.

We invite you to complete our *ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC Gubernatorial Commitment Survey*. As a public position, the Governor is critical for setting the tenor and tone of what it means for residents to experience a thriving Connecticut. As such, the public has a right to know your views on various topics referenced within the commitment survey.

All of the identified Gubernatorial candidates have received a request to complete this *ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC Gubernatorial Commitment Survey*. Please provide your full response by October 7, 2022.

Our commitment survey consists of 13 Yes/No questions, each with the opportunity to provide a 250-word comment. Where neither "Yes" nor "No" is selected, the response will be recorded as "Did Not Respond." We also a request that you submit a brief 1 paragraph biography with your responses to this commitment survey. Each candidate's response will be posted on our website.

Please direct any questions to Claudine Constant, ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC Secretary at cconstant@acluct.org or 860-471-8477.

Sincerely,

Claudine Constant
ACLU Rise PAC Secretary

ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC Gubernatorial

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Commitment Survey

Ensuring all Families have an Opportunity to Thrive

- 1) During the 2022 legislative session, statutory language [addressing the act of collecting “prison debt”](#) was signed into law,¹ however the language does not adequately protect everyone who has completed their sentences and earned the right to support themselves and move on with their lives. Will you commit to legislation during the 2023 legislative session that ends the unfair and excessively punitive practice of Connecticut seeking to collect so-called “prison debt” from formerly incarcerated people and their loved ones? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

No. I don't believe the government should completely eliminate “prison debt” collection. Both taxpayers and the formerly incarcerated have expectations of reasonable outcomes that work to the benefit of both the larger society and the families of the convicted. Society should have a stake in 1) the probability of the incarcerated being remorseful and fully rehabilitated, 2) that the family is not burdened with additional debt upon release when successful reintegration is of utmost concern, and 3) that there be a metric of accountability for the crime. I propose that the optimal solution is for a first offender to be given a complete waiver of prison costs, and that for recidivists (repeat offenders), their cost of incarceration be placed into escrow until completion of a program that accounts for their commitment to family, children (in any), and job search with government assistance. This would be reviewed annually by their probation officer and submitted to an independent oversight committee, and upon successful completion, their cost of incarceration would be waived, thus a win-win-win outcome.

¹ Conn. Gen. Stat. § 18-85a (2022), as amended by P.A. 22-118, § 457 (2022), available at <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/act/pa/pdf/2022PA-00118-R00HB-05506-PA.pdf>.



2) Prisons are not the solution to properly serve and rehabilitate young people. In December 2021, the Department of Justice released an official statement after an investigation into Manson Youth Institution stating there is reasonable cause to believe Manson Youth Institution’s isolation practices and lack of mental health services harm children under the age of 18 and place them at risk of serious harm, violating the U.S Constitution.² It was also stated Manson Youth Institution does not provide the appropriate special education services to those in need, violating the Individuals with Disabilities Act. Will you commit to saving taxpayer dollars by supporting the permanent closure of Manson Youth Institution by 2024? Please give a clear “Yes” or “No” to the question and any explanation supporting your response.

If the DOJ recommends working towards permanent closure with reinvestment in other programs that may better serve our young people, then Yes. Any rehabilitation program that demonstrates a higher probability of dysfunction or self-harm, such as the case with Manson, should have serious consideration for immediate shut down and its officers banned from future state grants or loans. We need to spend more on interventions without reducing police funding. We would enhance alternatives to prison, but not look to close them down without an immediately available viable alternative.

3) Race and economic status should not determine whether a person can afford their freedom and defend themselves against criminal charges. With that in mind, do you commit to supporting legislation that eliminates the cash bail system in Connecticut by 2024? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. Elimination of the cash bail system is at the top of our list of state predatory practices that unfairly hits the financially or ethnically disadvantaged. The cash

² Press Release, U.S. Department of Justice, Justice Department Finds that Manson Youth Institution Violates the U.S. Constitution and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Dec. 21, 2021), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-finds-manson-youth-institution-violates-us-constitution-and-individuals>.



bail system as currently constituted makes re-entry far more difficult, damages families, and actually increases the likelihood of a return to crime when a family is constantly underwater in trying to make ends meet with living expenses.

Investing in Communities as an Alternative to Investing in Policing

4) We cannot have an equitable and thriving Connecticut until our state actively promotes and invests in racial justice. In 2021, the State of Connecticut budgeted at least \$942,037,876 on policing and incarceration, while certain investments in public health and human rights have either been significantly reduced or eliminated in their entirety, deeply harming Black and Latinx people, women, youth, LGBTQ people, and disabled people.

a) Do you believe that the state of Connecticut should be sustainably investing in systems and solutions that ensure all residents have the opportunity to thrive? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. I’m committed to ensuring all citizens can thrive by investing in systems and solutions that provide better and more equitable outcomes especially towards racial justice. I’m currently engaged with experts and organizations that sponsor programs and policies that are more effective than current ones. We need to invest in solutions that solve Connecticut’s worst achievement gap in the nation, fix the school-to-prison pipeline, and create economic opportunities for our youth and disadvantaged communities.

b) If yes, will you commit to shifting 3% of Connecticut’s overall spending on policing and incarceration to support the following:

i) Children today face unprecedented rates of mental illness and trauma, and they are most likely to receive mental health care through their school systems. Rather than fund professionals who are trained to provide care to students in crisis like counselors, psychologists, nurses, and social workers, many schools instead increase police presence despite the lack of evidence supporting the capability of police to aid



mental health, education outcomes, or safety.³ In Connecticut, 7.4% of students go to a school with police officers but no counselor, compared to the national average of 3.5%. Connecticut also does not meet the recommended ratios of social workers and counselors to students.⁴ Will you commit to supporting legislation that ensures school aged students have access to qualified mental health professionals and supports that do not rely on policing or policing institutions that funnel youth into punitive systems or incarceration by 2024? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. I am committed to proper funding to reach recommended ratios of social workers and counselors to students without negatively impacting our ability to police our communities. We need to spend more on interventions without reducing police funding. The current state budget has significant imbalances between “soft-variable” solutions (e.g., empathy training, anti-humiliation, anti-bullying programs) and “hard-variable” remediations, which often make the underlying problems worse. Independent Party members and candidates are sponsoring unique programs, monitored by mental health professionals, that address the true root causes of youth dystopia and measure healing progress. If elected, I expect to both increase allocations within the budget to prioritize such programs and invest in advanced practices that will enhance outcomes.

- ii) Policing and incarceration do not directly address the mental health needs of communities, and punitive approaches to dealing with mental health issues often harm Black and Latinx communities. Community Health Workers (CHWs) are trained to directly meet the physical health and mental wellness needs of Connecticut residents, which has become especially critical with the rise of COVID-19. Will you

³ Amir Whitaker et al., *Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff Is Harming Students*, AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION (Mar. 2019), https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf.

⁴ *Id.* at 12–13, 17.



commit to allocating \$9,000,000 in your proposed budget, which is 1% of the overall policing and incarceration budget for the State of Connecticut to invest in a more robust community health worker workforce? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. I am committed to proper funding of physical health and mental wellness. Community Health Workers are currently underpaid and overburdened. We need to do better and fund more successful programs to address the underlying problems before they turn into crime and violence. Again, we need to spend more on interventions without reducing police funding.

5) Police surveillance isn't safety or health. Black and Latinx people are far more likely to be misidentified by facial recognition based surveillance. Will you commit to supporting legislation that bans the use of this technology by Connecticut law enforcement? Please provide a clear “yes” or “no” answer and any explanation supporting your response.

Yes. We need to rollback deployment of facial recognition surveillance technology until its effectiveness can be proven without disproportionately misidentifying Black and Latinx people. As founder of Verbi and an expert in facility safety solutions, I've had direct experience with evaluating facial recognition surveillance technology and am deeply versed on the dangers to society of misused technology. As such, I believe having someone like me in a decision-making role at the highest level of government is a powerful antidote to the high potential for misuse or abuse by technology like this, when far better technologies are available that are non-intrusive. As a governor candidate, I go beyond just support and can intelligently expose why such technologies are flawed in their claims and propose better solutions. Therefore, we need to step back, improve this technology with independent and proper societal analysis of benefits versus effectiveness and fairness before reintroducing to law

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enforcement. In the meantime, we can expand trust-building programs between police and the communities they serve.

- 6) Clean Slate, [a critical piece of legislation](#) that ensures some people living with a criminal record have an opportunity to restart their lives after a certain amount of time was signed into law in June of 2021 and will go into effect in January of 2023.⁵ To ensure effective implementation, will you commit to fully funding the systems needed to make Clean Slate operate as intended, as well as dedicating at least \$500,000 , which is less than 1% of Connecticut’s policing and incarceration budget, in 2023 for the hiring of a Clean Slate implementation Manager, as well as the development and execution of an awareness campaign using billboards, bus ads, digital ads, etc.? Please provide a clear “yes” or “no” answer and any explanation supporting your response.

I’m a firm believer in second chances. Some of the most successful people and impactful movements in history are the result of second chances due to learning from failure to make better future decisions. However, I do not believe that a person should receive a clean slate based solely on the amount of time served. A willingness and commitment to reintegration as a productive, contributing member of society needs to be consistently demonstrated and measured. Therefore, I support funding second chances and a clean slate for those meeting certain demonstrable qualifications of rehabilitation proportional to the crime committed without reducing policing funding. Some qualifications would include mental health assessment, counseling, therapy, job search, and work success. Our top priority should be long term sustainability with a clean slate.

⁵ An Act Concerning the Board of Pardons and Paroles, Erasure of Criminal Records for Certain Misdemeanors 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, S.B. 1019 (2021), available at

https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&which_year=2021&bill_num=1019#.

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7) According to Connecticut Voices for Children, data collected in from April 2020 to March 2021 demonstrated that close to 50% of youth aged 18 to 24 experienced significant economic distress during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶ Connecticut invested \$2.6 million dollars in policing to address surveillance and auto theft in the state, a decision that will further disproportionately impact Black and Latinx youth in Connecticut.⁷ Accordingly, will you commit to shifting \$650,000, which is less than 1% of the overall policing and incarceration budget for the State of Connecticut, to begin addressing the root causes of economic crisis for Connecticut youth such as affordable housing and food insecurity by 2024? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. We need to properly fund solutions to the root causes of economic crisis for our young adults including affordable housing, food insecurity and economic opportunity. We need to prioritize solving the root causes that lead to crime rather than policing and prisons after crime is committed. Re-balancing priorities would not affect the budget for law enforcement since more affordable and effective solutions are available than what is currently in place.

8) On June 23, 2022, the United States Supreme Court reversed and remanded *Vega v. Tekoh*,⁸ effectively ensuring that a person cannot sue a police officer under federal civil rights laws for violating their Fifth Amendment rights. Will you commit to supporting legislation that creates a Connecticut Civil Rights Act, which would provide residents with a comprehensive right to cause of action in Connecticut courts if their civil rights are violated? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

⁶ *Ending the Criminalization of Youth: Address the Root*, CONNECTICUT JUSTICE ALLIANCE (2022), at 9–10, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6001c98f39fd1e2dbc6708c4/t/62b050d6a2a5202cec257db1/165572220191/CTJA+Revisit+%28web%29.pdf>; Ryan Wilson, *More Than a Health Crisis: Long-Term Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Connecticut Youth and Families*, CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN (Apr. 2021), https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/More-than-a-Health-Crisis_Just-Research.pdf.

⁷ P.A. 22-118, H.B. 5506 § 10 (2022).

⁸ *Vega v. Tekoh*, 597 U.S. ____ (2022).

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Yes. However, there should be protections for reasonable police action to perform their jobs to avoid frivolous lawsuits by that tiny minority who claim exemption from their own Constitutional obligations as citizens. We need to provide reasonable resources and protections to our police officers to empower them to better perform their difficult jobs serving and protecting our communities.

Modernization of Voting

9) Every person that is 18 years of age or older in Connecticut should have a Constitutional right to vote, including people who are currently serving prison sentences. Will you support legislation which, like Vermont and Maine, extends voting rights to people who are incarcerated in our state by 2024? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

It depends on the language of the legislation - Yes for misdemeanors, first-time minor felonies, and rehabilitated people who have received a clean slate after serving time for a major felony; No for recidivists (repeat offenders).

10) Connecticut is one of sixteen states that does not permit no-excuse absentee voting. Will you support a constitutional amendment to permit no-excuse absentee voting? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. Connecticut is one of the most restrictive states in the nation in dire need of electoral reform including absentee voting. I am also committed to supporting legislative action on early voting, ranked choice voting and open primaries.

Expansion of Reproductive Access and LGBTQ Rights

11) Do you believe that Connecticut residents should have equitable access to reproductive care?

Please provide a clear “yes” or “no” answer. If so, will you commit to dedicating at least

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\$500,000, which is less than 1% of Connecticut’s policing and incarceration budget, to ensuring that this access is realized for everyone, including through accessible transportation? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. However, we need to determine the appropriate funding without negatively affecting our policing and incarceration budget.

12) Residents of Connecticut, including youth, deserve quality health care access and provision of care regardless of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Will you commit to upholding Connecticut’s existing laws⁹ that ensure all residents have access to gender-affirming care? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

We support the guidelines of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), as it applies to any Connecticut legislation regarding gender dysphoria.

13) Will you commit to upholding Connecticut’s existing anti-discrimination laws that protect transgender kids in schools and their communities? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes.

⁹ Budget Implementer, P.A. 22-118, H.B. 5506 § 484 (2022).