



765 Asylum Avenue, 2nd Floor
Hartford, CT 06105
860-523-9146
www.acluct.org

**Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 392, An Act Concerning
Statements Made By Juveniles**

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Ranking Members Kissel and Fishbein,
and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 392, An Act Concerning Statements Made By Juveniles.

The ACLU-CT is an organization dedicated to ending mass incarceration, eliminating racial disparities in the criminal legal system, and reducing harms to justice-impacted people. Among the most vulnerable people who become enmeshed in the criminal legal system are young people under the age of eighteen, who suffer unique harms due to their involvement in the criminal legal system and are more likely to experience even wider racial disparities than exist for adults.¹

While Connecticut has made important improvements in reducing the number of young people who are incarcerated, it has concurrently worsened racial and ethnic disparities.² In 2015, 79 percent of young people who were incarcerated were kids of color, but in 2019, the proportion rose to 84 percent.³ Young people who are incarcerated experience widespread sexual abuse,⁴ worsened mental health

¹ Colette Marcellin & Samantha Harvell, *Data Snapshot of Youth Incarceration in Connecticut*, URBAN INST. (May 2020), available at https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/102176/data-snapshot-of-youth-incarceration-in-connecticut_1.pdf.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Caitlin Curley, *Youth Incarceration in Our Juvenile Justice System May Do More Harm Than Good*, GENBIZ, (Oct. 12, 2016), available at <https://genbiz.com/youth-incarceration-juvenile-justice-system-may-harm-good>.

outcomes, greater risk of self-harm, significant and often permanent interruption of education, and long-term damage to employment—with little to no corresponding improvement in community safety.⁵

With these unique harms and disparities in mind, the ACLU-CT supports Senate Bill 392, which takes steps to protect more kids from entanglement with the criminal legal system. This bill would expand and extend protections concerning statements made to law enforcement officials by a child under eighteen, which children sixteen and under already benefit from. Widening the age to include all children under eighteen is the sensible and just thing to do, and as such, the ACLU-CT urges this Committee to support Senate Bill 392.

⁵ Barry Holman & Jason Ziedenberg, *The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities*, JUST. POL'Y INST. (Nov. 2006), available at <https://justicepolicy.org/research/the-dangers-of-detention-the-impact-of-incarcerating-youth-in-detention-and-other-secure-facilities/>.