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Written Testimony Opposing House Bill 5074, An Act Concerning Funding for Operation Wingspan to Assist in the Recovery of Stolen Vehicles

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Ranking Members Miner and France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in opposition to House Bill 5074, An Act Concerning Funding for Operation Wingspan to Assist in the Recovery of Stolen Vehicles.

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 exists for adults.¹ The ACLU-CT is committed to ending police violence and racism in policing in all forms. In addition to accountability measures, Connecticut must also divest from policing and reinvest in programs that build strong and safe communities. Policymakers must reduce policing's responsibilities, scale, and tools to build an equitable future for all people in Connecticut.

We have significant concerns with House Bill 5074 because it unnecessarily invests additional money in policing, rather than funding social support services that will

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.

actually address the cause of crime. The ACLU-CT opposes investment in policing, especially at a time when many in Connecticut are struggling but social services remain underfunded. Project Wingspan had already eaten up federal COVID-19 relief funds,² which should have been allocated to pandemic relief and community-based violence prevention programs. Further funds should not be allocated to Project Wingspan when time and time again research has found that increased policing fails to reduce crime. As such, the ACLU-CT opposes House Bill 5074, and we urge this Committee to do the same.

² News 12 Staff, *Police Departments Collaborate to Form New Car Theft Task Force*, News 12 Long Island (Nov. 25, 2021 at 5:58 PM), available at <https://longisland.news12.com/police-departments-collaborate-to-form-new-car-theft-taskforce-from-covid-19-relief-funds>.