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Written Testimony Opposing Senate Bill 386, An Act Concerning a Study of the Juvenile Delinquency Laws of This State

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 opposition to Senate Bill 386, An Act Concerning a Study of the Juvenile Delinquency Laws of This State.

The ACLU-CT is an organization dedicated to ending mass incarceration and eliminating racism in the criminal legal system. The harms of incarceration and systemic racism are magnified when people are subjected to incarceration as young people. The ACLU-CT supports efforts to study the status of our criminal legal system to glean ways to reduce incarceration in this state, especially amongst our youngest. But, it is essential for any body dedicated to the study of our criminal laws and carceral system to lift up the voices of those directly impacted. We already have a body dedicated to the study of our juvenile justice system: the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC). The JJPOC meets frequently—year round as a group with subcommittees that meet monthly with the goal of studying how our legal system effects our youth. The JJPOC, most importantly, ensures the representation of directly impacted people in their work.

The ACLU-CT opposes Senate Bill 386 because there is simply no need for the bill. What is proposed in Senate Bill 386 is a watered-down version of the JJPOC, a committee that does excellent and thorough work on the juvenile justice system in

Connecticut. Therefore, the working group proposed in Senate Bill 386 is duplicative of the JJPOC, yet it meets less often, with far fewer appointees, and no community voice. The ACLU-CT opposes Senate Bill 386, and urges this Committee to do the same.