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Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 447, An Act Concerning a Study of Criminal Laws of This State and House Bill 5471, An Act Concerning the Study of Criminal Procedure 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 written testimony in support of Senate Bill 447, An Act Concerning a Study of Criminal Laws of This State and House Bill 5471, An Act Concerning the Study of Criminal Procedure Laws of This State.

The ACLU-CT is an organization dedicated to ending mass incarceration and eliminating systemic racism in the criminal legal system. One of the reasons that mass incarceration has proliferated over the past forty years is that there are more criminal laws on the books criminalizing a wider variety of behavior than has ever been criminalized before.¹ Reviewing these laws and removing duplicative, excessive, or outdated laws, or laws that we as a state no longer believe merit criminal punishment, is an important step to reducing the number of things a person can face incarceration for. Making sure our criminal law and procedure statutes are kept modern and reflect our current societal values—including an evergrowing recognition from people of all political beliefs that mass incarceration is not effective²—is important work. We support Senate Bill 447 and House Bill 5471 which prescribe

¹ Charles G. Koch and Mark V. Holden, *The Overcriminalization of America*, POLITICO (Jan. 7, 2015), available at <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/01/overcriminalization-of-america-113991/>.

² *Id.*

those kinds of reviews and provide an important chance to modernize and prune our criminal statutes.

We encourage this Committee to consider amending the language of these bills slightly to ensure that formerly incarcerated people are represented in the bodies that will be conducting those reviews. People with lived experience have expertise that is incredibly valuable in determining which laws continue to serve the people of Connecticut and which should be phased out. We encourage this Committee to make that change in both Senate Bill 447 and House Bill 5471 and to support both bills with that amendment.