

Written Testimony on Increasing Funding for the Criminal Justice Commission

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Ranking Members Berthel and Nuccio, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

1: Introduce yourself and (if applicable) your organization.

2: Explain how your personal values align with requiring prosecutorial accountability and funding the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC). Some suggested statements:

- I want to end mass incarceration in Connecticut, and we can't do that without holding prosecutors accountable for meeting that goal of ending mass incarceration .
- I think that people accused of a crime and survivors of crime should be treated fairly and equally no matter what their zip code is.
- I think that when a person is accused of a crime, their zip code shouldn't determine what kind of charges, plea bargains, or sentence recommendations they will get.
- Prosecutors hold people's lives and fates in their hands, and I think that with that enormous power should come even more oversight and transparency.

3: Facts and data supporting prosecutorial accountability. Feel free to reference the our Prosecutorial Accountability Toolkit or use some of the information below:

- Because people convicted of crimes face hundreds of lifelong barriers to full participation in society, prosecutors make decisions that impact a person for the rest of their life, every day.
- There are significant differences in the way crimes are prosecuted in Connecticut. For example, people convicted of drug offenses are 2.4 times more likely to get prison sentences in certain parts of the state. We should be treating drug use as a public health, not criminal, issue, in all parts of the state.
- State's attorneys in Connecticut serve longer terms than state senators, state representatives, U.S. representatives, U.S. senators, the governor, the attorney general, and the chief state's attorney, but they have no regular external analysis of their judicial districts.

4: Explain prosecutorial accountability requires funding the CJC, the body that oversees our state's attorneys. Some suggested statements:

- The CJC oversees the weighty task of appointing all state prosecutors employed by the Division of Criminal Justice, but it operates on a shoestring budget with limited power.
- The CJC's budget must be increased to adequately cover the costs of exercising their statutory powers, which include conducting national searches to fill state's attorney, deputy chief state's attorney, and chief state's attorney vacancies, and conduct division investigations.

5: Conclude by asking the committee to support increasing the CJC's funding.