



Legislative Testimony
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**ACLU-CT Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 6554, An Act
Appropriating Funds for Certain Homeless Programs**

Senator Moore, Representative Luxenberg, Ranking Members Sampson and Scott,
and distinguished members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am writing to testify in support of House Bill 6554, An Act Appropriating Funds for Certain Homeless Programs.

The ACLU-CT believes in a society where all people, including those who have been convicted or accused of a crime, have equal opportunity to contribute to their communities and build successful and fulfilling lives. Connecticut is stronger and safer when all people have a fair chance of accessing housing. People who are formally incarcerated are nearly ten times more likely to be homeless than any other members of the public.¹ Rates of homelessness are especially high among people of color and women with criminal records.² Across the country, almost 50,000 people every year enter homeless shelters directly from incarceration.³ For people reentering their communities after incarceration, being homeless or unstably housed heightens the risk of reoffending.⁴

¹ Memo to Members, *Formerly Incarcerated People Are Nearly 10 Times More Likely to Be Homeless*, NAT'L LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION (Aug. 20, 2018), available at <https://nlihc.org/resource/formerly-incarcerated-people-are-nearly-10-times-more-likely-be-homeless>.

² Lucius Couloute, *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness Among Formerly Incarcerated People*, PRISON POL'Y INITIATIVE (Aug. 2018), available at <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>.

³ Mindy Mitchell, *Homelessness and Incarceration Are Intimately Linked. New Federal Funding Is Available to Reduce the Harm of Both*, NAT'L ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS (Mar. 29, 2018), available at <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-incarceration-intimately-linked-new-federal-funding-available-reduce-harm/>.

⁴ Patricia McKernan, *Homelessness and Prisoner Re-Entry: Examining Barriers to Housing*, Volunteers of America (last accessed Feb. 28, 2022), available at <https://www.vo.org/homelessness-and-prisoner-reentry>.

The reasons for this appallingly high rate of homelessness among people with criminal records are complex and many, fueled by systematic racism, but discrimination by landlords, inadequate reentry services, and underfunded transition services upon a person's end of sentence are contributing factors. Connecticut needs to invest in housing programs and services specifically for people leaving incarceration. The state also needs to remove barriers that make it impossible for a person to rejoin their family at home at the end of their sentence.⁵ Funding homeless services that are inclusive of people with criminal records is essential to ending homelessness in Connecticut. As such, the ACLU-CT supports HB 6554 and urges this Committee to do the same.

⁵ For example, Regs., Conn. State Agencies §§ 8-68f-12, 17b-812-12(c)(4) (2020).