



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 256,
An Act Concerning Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements**

Senator McLachlan, Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Kaley Lentini, and I am legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 256, An Act Concerning Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements.

As an organization that is deeply committed to racial justice and equality under the law, the ACLU of Connecticut supports this bill, which attempts to empower legislators and the public alike with more information about the potential impacts that legislative proposals would have on people of color throughout the state.

Equality under the law is critically important. Recognizing this, many members of the Connecticut General Assembly have worked recently to try to reduce the harms of legislative policies on communities of color. It is important to memorialize their efforts and ensure that future legislators will have the opportunity to understand how their legislation may disproportionately affect people of color throughout our state. Though it is clear that many legislators work to gather input from all stakeholders when crafting legislation, there are times when the legislature's fast-paced environment makes those efforts difficult. Providing all legislators the opportunity to seek a statement on the potential impact of their legislation on historically disadvantaged people would give these elected officials the ability to better understand the nuances of the policies they are creating and to avoid unintended harms.

Because legislators often review hundreds of pieces of legislation about multitudes of subjects, there are times when they may not realize the potential unintended negative impacts that a bill will have on certain people. This is particularly true when the legislature is attempting something complicated or innovative.

In these situations, racial and ethnic impact statements, written by a nonpartisan office, could be very helpful for legislators and the public.

Currently, any member of the General Assembly can request a racial and ethnic impact statement for bills that “could, if passed, increase or decrease the pretrial or sentenced population of the correctional facilities in this state.” This bill expands that option for legislators to any bill. This is important because many bills, not just criminal justice bills brought in the Judiciary Committee, may have a racial and ethnic impact of which many people are unaware. For example, bills regarding education, higher education, housing, and public safety may have a negative racial and ethnic impact on the state.

This bill would enable the members of this committee and your colleagues in every committee to craft better legislation that has a positive impact on all Connecticut residents. I strongly urge you to support this bill.