



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 6723,
An Act Concerning Reform of Parole Release and Revocation Practices
and the Membership of the Board of Pardons and Paroles**

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is David McGuire, and I am executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 6723, An Act Concerning Reform of Parole Release and Revocation Practices and the Membership of the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

As an organization that believes government transparency and accountability are imperative to a democracy and that fights for fair and equal justice for everyone in the criminal justice system, the ACLU-CT supports efforts to increase access to data about the work of the Board of Pardons and Paroles and to include justice-impacted people and victims on such bodies in the criminal justice system. We therefore support House Bill 6723, which would require the Board of Pardons and Paroles to publish statistics regarding its decisions and add a formerly incarcerated person and a crime victim to the board.

House Bill 6723 is an important step toward meaningful transparency. The bill would require the state to collect, report, and publish information about decisions made by the Board of Pardons and Paroles. That information would include data on race and gender; the length of sanctions for criminal versus technical violations; and parole denial, rescission, or revocation outcomes. If passed, the bill would make this information available quarterly. This would allow lawmakers and the public to better evaluate the pardons and paroles system and, should it be necessary, propose evidence-based reforms to improve the system for the betterment of Connecticut residents who interact with the board.

This bill would also require the Board of Pardons and Paroles to track, analyze, and publish data on the costs associated with the rescission or revocation of a person's parole; implement evidence-informed strategies to reduce incarceration for people who have had their parole rescinded or revoked; and limit rescission or revocation of parole in cases where violations are attributed to an alcohol or drug dependency or a mental health condition. These changes would attach a real cost to the rescission and revocation decisions made by the board. When

the board rescinds or revokes a person's parole and that person is incarcerated, the effects reverberate across communities. These effects include financial costs to the state, the person who is incarcerated, their family, and their employer. This bill would ensure transparency about the true costs to the people who are incarcerated, their communities, and our state and create an opportunity to reform the system to reduce those costs. We encourage the committee, however, to include in this provision the frequency of reporting and where the board must publish the data.

The priorities of the Board of Pardons and Paroles depend upon the composition of the board. It is important that the board be comprised of a diverse group of people with different experiences relating to the justice system. It is critical to have on the board at least one justice-impacted person who has had a hearing before the panel to ensure the board focuses on the impacts of the board's decisions on the people who are before them and prioritizes ending mass incarceration in the state. Formerly incarcerated people are experts in the criminal justice system, and the board would benefit from their expertise. Including a crime victim on the board would ensure that the board also considers situations from the viewpoint of a victim and makes the best decisions for everyone involved.

We strongly urge the committee to support House Bill 6723 to increase transparency around the Board of Pardons and Paroles and to improve upon the composition of the board.