



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 1056,
An Act Concerning Allotment Reductions for the Division of Public
Defender Services and Diversionary Programs**

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 Senate Bill 1056, An Act Concerning Allotment Reductions for the Division of Public Defender Services and Diversionary Programs.

As an organization that fights for fairness and justice in the criminal justice system, the ACLU-CT supports this bill to ensure indigent people accused of crimes have the legal representation they are guaranteed by our constitution.

This bill would help protect funding for the constitutional right to counsel for indigent people. It would require the Office of Policy and Management to alert the Chief Public Defender of proposals that would reduce the allotment for the Division of Public Defender Services. This would give the division notice about the reduction and allow them to submit their objections. This provision is incredibly important to maintaining the ability of the division to provide legal representation to people who cannot otherwise afford it, as required by our constitution.

Senate Bill 1056 would also increase access to diversionary programs for people who cannot afford them. It would create a presumption that someone who is eligible to be represented by a public defender should not have to pay for certain diversionary programs. It also prohibits the requirement of community service if the application or participation fee for a diversionary program is waived. Waiving the fees for adult and juvenile diversionary programs for people who are eligible to be represented by public defenders enables more people to take advantage of diversionary programs, keeping people out of prison and offering them rehabilitation. The bill would also waive fees for programs that adults and juveniles participate in while on probation if they are eligible to be represented by a public defender. Access to justice, including diversionary programs, should be available to everyone in Connecticut, despite their ability to pay.

We encourage the committee to support Senate Bill 1056.