



Legislative Testimony  
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**Written Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 6682, An Act Concerning  
the Sentence for Murder Committed in the Course of Commission of a  
Family Violence Crime**

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Ranking Members Kissel and Fishbein,  
and distinguished members of the Judiciary 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 strong opposition to House Bill 6682, An Act Concerning the Sentence for Murder Committed in the Course of Commission of a Family Violence Crime.

Family violence is a legitimate problem in Connecticut and throughout the country, and it requires real, meaningful solutions that truly increase safety and community health. That unfortunately will not be accomplished through this bill. Longer prison sentences have persisted, despite strong evidence that “lengthy prison terms are counterproductive for public safety as they result in incarceration of individuals long past the time that they have ‘aged out’ of the high crime years, thereby diverting resources from more promising crime reduction initiatives.”<sup>1</sup> Moreover, longer sentences do not appear to have any significant deterrent effect.<sup>2</sup>

Systems that have reduced sentences—notably, the federal criminal system—have not noticed any negative effect on public safety.<sup>3</sup> In short, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that permitting life without parole sentences will deter crime.

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<sup>1</sup> Marc Mauer, *Long-Term Sentences: Time to Reconsider the Scale of Punishment*, SENTENCING PROJECT (Nov. 5, 2018), available at <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/long-term-sentences-time-reconsider-scalepunishment/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

The lack of evidentiary support demonstrates that this proposed change is neither needed nor wise.

Creating real public safety requires investing in programs and services that truly prevent and end violence at its root, rather than putting that money into the expensive, ineffective, and violent system of ending mass incarceration. This requires that the General Assembly continue making progress toward reducing the number of people who enter the criminal legal system and reducing the amount of time that people who do not enter the system serve. The legislature will not achieve that kind of progress if it expands sentences. The ACLU-CT strongly opposes House Bill 6682 and urges this Committee to do the same.