



Legislative Testimony
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Written Testimony Opposing Senate Bill 141, An Act Concerning the Expansion of the Crisis Initiative Pilot Program Throughout the State

Senator Gaston, Representative Boyd, Ranking Members Cicarella and Howard, and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am writing to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 141, An Act Concerning the Expansion of the Crisis Initiative Pilot Program Throughout the State.

Contact between community members and police can have tragic consequences for people experiencing mental health crises and substance use disorder.¹ People who are in mental health crises need treatment. As such, public health and social work actors should be the ones to take the lead when addressing mental health crises and addiction, not as an auxiliary afterthought to police. Rather than continue to entrench the role of police in mental health, this Committee should seek to divest police from this function entirely.

We oppose Senate Bill 141 because of its failure to reduce the role of policing in our communities, particularly with regard to some of our most vulnerable residents when they are in need of medical care for a mental health crisis. We encourage this Committee to re-evaluate its centering of police in mental health care entirely and shift its focus to the use of mental health professionals in crisis interventions. Likewise, the use of addiction services experts should be something funded

¹ See, e.g., *If You Are Black and in a Mental Health Crisis, 911 Can Be a Death Sentence*, INTERCEPT (Sept. 29, 2019), available at <https://theintercept.com/2019/09/29/police-shootings-mental-health/>.

independently from policing. As such, we oppose Senate Bill 141 and urge this Committee to do the same.