



September 13, 2022

Dear Ms. Bicking,

It has come to our attention that you may be pursuing the opportunity to assume the role of Connecticut's next Governor. Thank you for taking a step to advance your role in ensuring all people in Connecticut have an equitable opportunity to thrive!

The ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC is a nonpartisan political action committee with the purpose of building the necessary relationships, public awareness, public narratives, and pressure felt by politicians in order to build the political power of people directly impacted by civil rights and liberties issues. At our core, is a foundational belief that we cannot have a thriving Connecticut until our state actively promotes and invests in racial justice.

The ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC is a new tool that will enable people directly impacted by civil rights and civil liberties issues to hold currently and would-be elected officials accountable to promises made on the campaign trail.

We invite you to complete our *ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC Gubernatorial Commitment Survey*. As a public position, the Governor is critical for setting the tenor and tone of what it means for residents to experience a thriving Connecticut. As such, the public has a right to know your views on various topics referenced within the commitment survey.

All of the identified Gubernatorial candidates have received a request to complete this *ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC Gubernatorial Commitment Survey*. Please provide your full response by October 7, 2022.

Our commitment survey consists of 13 Yes/No questions, each with the opportunity to provide a 250-word comment. Where neither "Yes" nor "No" is selected, the response will be recorded as "Did Not Respond." We also a request that you submit a brief 1 paragraph biography with your responses to this commitment survey. Each candidate's response will be posted on our website.

Please direct any questions to Claudine Constant, ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC Secretary at cconstant@acluct.org or 860-471-8477.

Sincerely,

Claudine Constant
ACLU Rise PAC Secretary

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ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC Gubernatorial Commitment Survey

Ensuring all Families have an Opportunity to Thrive

1) During the 2022 legislative session, statutory language [addressing the act of collecting “prison debt”](#) was signed into law,¹ however the language does not adequately protect everyone who has completed their sentences and earned the right to support themselves and move on with their lives. Will you commit to legislation during the 2023 legislative session that ends the unfair and excessively punitive practice of Connecticut seeking to collect so-called “prison debt” from formerly incarcerated people and their loved ones? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. The formerly incarcerated nor their loved ones should not be saddled with additional debt post-release.

2) Prisons are not the solution to properly serve and rehabilitate young people. In December 2021, the Department of Justice released an official statement after an investigation into Manson Youth Institution stating there is reasonable cause to believe Manson Youth Institution’s isolation practices and lack of mental health services harm children under the age of 18 and place them at risk of serious harm, violating the U.S Constitution.² It was also stated Manson Youth Institution does not provide the appropriate special education services to those in need, violating the Individuals with Disabilities Act. Will you commit to saving taxpayer dollars by supporting the permanent closure of Manson Youth Institution by 2024? Please give a clear “Yes” or “No” to the question and any explanation supporting your response.

¹ Conn. Gen. Stat. § 18-85a (2022), as amended by P.A. 22-118, § 457 (2022), *available at* <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2022/act/pa/pdf/2022PA-00118-R00HB-05506-PA.pdf>.

² Press Release, U.S. Department of Justice, Justice Department Finds that Manson Youth Institution Violates the U.S. Constitution and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Dec. 21, 2021), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-finds-manson-youth-institution-violates-us-constitution-and-in-dividuals>.



Yes. I also report diverting the funds from Manson Youth Institution to restorative justice practices that focus on housing, career and comprehensive mental and physical health care access for adjudicated youth as well as restorative justice measures to help reintegrate back into their communities of origin, should they wish to return.

- 3) Race and economic status should not determine whether a person can afford their freedom and defend themselves against criminal charges. With that in mind, do you commit to supporting legislation that eliminates the cash bail system in Connecticut by 2024? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. Cash bail disproportionately affects lower income persons of color and will be eliminated in the first 100 days of my first term as Governor.

Investing in Communities as an Alternative to Investing in Policing

- 4) We cannot have an equitable and thriving Connecticut until our state actively promotes and invests in racial justice. In 2021, the State of Connecticut budgeted at least \$942,037,876 on policing and incarceration, while certain investments in public health and human rights have either been significantly reduced or eliminated in their entirety, deeply harming Black and Latinx people, women, youth, LGBTQ people, and disabled people.

- a) Do you believe that the state of Connecticut should be sustainably investing in systems and solutions that ensure all residents have the opportunity to thrive? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. Everyone deserves to feel safe and secure in their own neighborhood without the threat of police violence.

- b) If yes, will you commit to shifting 3% of Connecticut’s overall spending on policing and incarceration to support the following:

- i) Children today face unprecedented rates of mental illness and trauma, and they are most likely to receive mental health care through their school systems. Rather than fund professionals who are trained to provide care to students in crisis like

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counselors, psychologists, nurses, and social workers, many schools instead increase police presence despite the lack of evidence supporting the capability of police to aid mental health, education outcomes, or safety.³ In Connecticut, 7.4% of students go to a school with police officers but no counselor, compared to the national average of 3.5%. Connecticut also does not meet the recommended ratios of social workers and counselors to students.⁴ Will you commit to supporting legislation that ensures school aged students have access to qualified mental health professionals and supports that do not rely on policing or policing institutions that funnel youth into punitive systems or incarceration by 2024? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes.

- ii) Policing and incarceration do not directly address the mental health needs of communities, and punitive approaches to dealing with mental health issues often harm Black and Latinx communities. Community Health Workers (CHWs) are trained to directly meet the physical health and mental wellness needs of Connecticut residents, which has become especially critical with the rise of COVID-19. Will you commit to allocating \$9,000,000 in your proposed budget, which is 1% of the overall policing and incarceration budget for the State of Connecticut to invest in a more robust community health worker workforce? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes.

- 5) Police surveillance isn't safety or health. Black and Latinx people are far more likely to be misidentified by facial recognition based surveillance. Will you commit to supporting legislation that bans the use of this technology by Connecticut law enforcement? Please provide a clear “yes” or “no” answer and any explanation supporting your response.

³ Amir Whitaker et al., *Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff Is Harming Students*, AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION (Mar. 2019),

https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf.

⁴ *Id.* at 12–13, 17.

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Yes. Most recent data have shown that facial recognition hardware and algorithms are calibrated appropriately to distinguish non-White facial features.

- 6) Clean Slate, [a critical piece of legislation](#) that ensures some people living with a criminal record have an opportunity to restart their lives after a certain amount of time was signed into law in June of 2021 and will go into effect in January of 2023.⁵ To ensure effective implementation, will you commit to fully funding the systems needed to make Clean Slate operate as intended, as well as dedicating at least \$500,000, which is less than 1% of Connecticut's policing and incarceration budget, in 2023 for the hiring of a Clean Slate implementation Manager, as well as the development and execution of an awareness campaign using billboards, bus ads, digital ads, etc.? Please provide a clear "yes" or "no" answer and any explanation supporting your response.

Yes.

- 7) According to Connecticut Voices for Children, data collected in from April 2020 to March 2021 demonstrated that close to 50% of youth aged 18 to 24 experienced significant economic distress during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶ Connecticut invested \$2.6 million dollars in policing to address surveillance and auto theft in the state, a decision that will further disproportionately impact Black and Latinx youth in Connecticut.⁷ Accordingly, will you commit to shifting \$650,000, which is less than 1% of the overall policing and incarceration budget for the State of Connecticut, to begin addressing the root causes of

⁵ An Act Concerning the Board of Pardons and Paroles, Erasure of Criminal Records for Certain Misdemeanors and Felony Offenses, Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Erased Criminal History Record Information and Concerning the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission with Respect to Misdemeanor Sentences, S.B. 1019 (2021), available at

https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&which_year=2021&bill_num=1019#.

⁶ *Ending the Criminalization of Youth: Address the Root*, CONNECTICUT JUSTICE ALLIANCE (2022), at 9–10,

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6001c98f39fd1e2dbc6708c4/t/62b050d6a2a5202cec257db1/1655722201991/CTJA+Revisit+%28web%29.pdf>; Ryan Wilson, *More Than a Health Crisis: Long-Term Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Connecticut Youth and Families*, CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN (Apr. 2021),

https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/More-than-a-Health-Crisis_Just-Research.pdf.

⁷ P.A. 22-118, H.B. 5506 § 10 (2022).

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economic crisis for Connecticut youth such as affordable housing and food insecurity by 2024? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. Addressing the root causes of chronic homelessness, limited income housing options and the prevalence of food-insecure households are priorities of my campaign.

<https://www.courant.com/opinion/op-ed/hc-op-michelle-louise-bicking-oped-20220726-0p4fmkpv3zfvlcxb6wuvcyfcpj-story.html>

<https://ctexaminer.com/2022/07/20/building-a-social-safety-net-one-serving-at-a-time/>

- 8)** On June 23, 2022, the United States Supreme Court reversed and remanded *Vega v. Tekoh*,⁸ effectively ensuring that a person cannot sue a police officer under federal civil rights laws for violating their Fifth Amendment rights. Will you commit to supporting legislation that creates a Connecticut Civil Rights Act, which would provide residents with a comprehensive right to cause of action in Connecticut courts if their civil rights are violated? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes. I would also eliminate qualified immunity for law enforcement.

Modernization of Voting

- 9)** Every person that is 18 years of age or older in Connecticut should have a Constitutional right to vote, including people who are currently serving prison sentences. Will you support legislation which, like Vermont and Maine, extends voting rights to people who are incarcerated in our state by 2024? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

⁸ *Vega v. Tekoh*, 597 U.S. ____ (2022).

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Yes. I also intend to register all voters unaffiliated and give them the option to chose their party affiliation.

10) Connecticut is one of sixteen states that does not permit no-excuse absentee voting. Will you support a constitutional amendment to permit no-excuse absentee voting? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes.

Expansion of Reproductive Access and LGBTQ Rights

11) Do you believe that Connecticut residents should have equitable access to reproductive care?

Please provide a clear “yes” or “no” answer. If so, will you commit to dedicating at least \$500,000, which is less than 1% of Connecticut’s policing and incarceration budget, to ensuring that this access is realized for everyone, including through accessible transportation? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Tes. I support comprehensive healthcare access for all and respect the bodily autonomy of all persons including children.

12) Residents of Connecticut, including youth, deserve quality health care access and provision of care regardless of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Will you commit to upholding Connecticut’s existing laws⁹ that ensure all residents have access to gender-affirming care? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes.

⁹ Budget Implementer, P.A. 22-118, H.B. 5506 § 484 (2022).

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13) Will you commit to upholding Connecticut’s existing anti-discrimination laws that protect transgender kids in schools and their communities? Please give a clear “yes” or “no” to the question and any explanation to support your response.

Yes.

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