

Dear Members of the CT Sentencing Commission:

My name is Constanza Segovia and I am testifying in support of An Act Concerning Connecticut Misdemeanor Sentences. This proposal would reduce the maximum length of all misdemeanor convictions in Connecticut from 365 days to 364 days.

I am a long-time Hartford resident and do a lot of work in my local community, including organizing with Hartford Deportation Defense. We are a community group made led by immigrants including mothers, neighbors, youth, and community members from Hartford and the surrounding area. In my role I see every day how this unjust and inhumane immigration system is tearing families apart, causing our communities to live in fear, and preventing individuals from being able to live and thrive in our state. Just this week I attended multiple events for community members fighting their deportation cases and facing the prospect of leaving their families and their communities behind.

One of these events was for one of our members, Wayzaro Walton. Wayzaro came to Hartford with her family in 1987, when she was 4 years old. Hartford is her home. She doesn't remember any other place. She went to school at Rawson, at Dr. Martin Luther King, at Quirk Middle, at New Britain High School and Weaver High School. She went to Camp Courant every summer, since she was 5. She now works as a chef at a hotel, making breakfast for guests. Wayzaro currently lives here with her wife Tamika and their 15-year-old daughter Azaiyah.

In 2011 ICE agents arrested Wayzaro during community service at Hartford Community Court on Washington Street. If her suspended sentence for a misdemeanor in 2005 had been one day shorter, 364 days instead of 365, none of what followed would have happened. She would not have worn an ankle monitor from 2011 to 2015 that tracked her every move. An ICE agent would not have confiscated her permanent residency card and her other ID papers. She would not have been required to check in regularly, and endure regular house visits. She had to endure all of this because of a one day difference in her sentence, and how that was seen at the federal level.

And now, just last month during her ICE check-in, with no explanation and despite no change in her situation, she got another ankle monitor and was ordered to get a one-way plane ticket to London for December 14th. That is only one week away. Wayzaro's daughter plays basketball at Conard High School in West Hartford and must face the prospect of her mom not being in the stands to watch her play. Her wife must face the prospect of raising their daughter and continuing to provide for her on her own. All of this because of one singular day.

Wayzaro has potential pathways to remain in this country so we as a community are going to continue fighting but I am here today to say that the state of Connecticut could have prevented this. If the maximum sentence for Wayzaro's charge had been 364 days instead of 365 days none of this would have happened. I think all of us here would agree that in this case the punishment does not fit the crime. If she was a citizen she would have done her community service and been on her way but because she was a permanent resident and not a citizen she has had to face this harsh and grossly unequal punishment and now must deal with the prospect of being torn away from her wife and daughter.

Connecticut can do something about this. Connecticut can reduce the sentence for offences carrying a maximum of 365 days to 364. This would mean that CT residents like Wayzaro would serve out the sentence given to them on the state level without having to worry about the

prospect of getting wrapped up in the federal immigration system. We as a state have the power to break this segment of the prison-to-deportation pipeline and ensure that unjust federal policies do not disproportionately impact our immigrant neighbors. Let's make sure that one day does not lead to a lifetime of pain, family separation, and broken communities.

We urge you to support An Act Concerning Connecticut Misdemeanor Sentences to protect the rights and lives of our community members.

Sincerely,

Constanza Segovia
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Hartford, CT