

Kristin Fortier
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December 5, 2018

To: CT Sentencing Commission
From: Kristin Fortier
Windham Immigrant Rights Coalition
The Neighbor Fund

RE: HB 5544- Misdemeanor Sentencing

I am writing in support of HB 5544: An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the CT Sentencing Commission with Respect to Misdemeanor Sentences. I have been working with the Windham Immigrant Rights Coalition in Northeastern CT for the past two years in supporting my undocumented friends and community members who are targeted by our unjust U.S. immigration laws. I am also a member of The Neighbor Fund, a 501c3 providing funds to undocumented immigrants in Windham, helping with legal fees, bail and family support.

I believe that changing the sentencing length for misdemeanors charges from 365 days to 364 days will protect families. Many undocumented immigrants are already navigating an immigration system that penalizes them for seeking asylum and a better life for themselves and their families in the face of terrible conditions in their home countries. Countries like Guatemala, El Salvador, and Haiti are in those conditions due to US policy and involvement. People fleeing poverty, violence, and unemployment can be directly correlated. People should not be further traumatized with being deported back to a dangerous country because they have committed a misdemeanor!

Also, someone who may currently hold a Green Card and gets convicted of a misdemeanor could be taken from their families, work, and home to be detained and deported. This is an act of violence! CT has stepped up to back its residents who are undocumented over the past few years. We want to ensure that they are guaranteed the opportunity to self-determination and safety and a chance like any other CT constituent to serve time for mistakes and get back to their lives. Misdemeanors charges should in no way be the road to deportation. Period!

CT should join with Nevada, California, Washington and Oregon in setting the example with the changes proposed. We have become leaders on a national front with Sanctuary status and The Trust Act, although it needs revision. We should continue to stand up for all CT residents in our charge! CT should not be setting up people to be taken into custody by ICE. It is a federal regulation and without this change from 365 to 364 days our CT judicial system is acting as an arm of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

We need clarity and decisiveness to show our residents and the nation that immigrants' rights and humanity matter to all of us here in CT.

Thank you.
Sincerely,

Kristin Fortier
Windham Immigrant Rights Coalition
The Neighbor Fund