

I am writing to express my public support for the potential legislative proposals submitted for Public Hearing on December 6, 2018 by the Sentencing Commission. Specifically, I am writing to voice support for:

1. Reform of the Sex Offender Registry and other recommendations from the Commission's report on sex offender sentencing, registration, and management system
2. Reform of the sentence modification and sentence review statutes
3. An Act Concerning Misdemeanor Sentences
4. An Act Concerning the Adoption and Safe Families Act
5. An Act Concerning Automatic Erasure of Certain Records
6. An Act Concerning Voting Rights
7. An Act Concerning Accelerated Pretrial Rehabilitation
8. Reform of the child pornography statutes

As a resident of Fairfield, Connecticut and an active volunteer with the CONECT (www.weconnect.org) Criminal Justice Reform team, I have become well-acquainted with the outsized punitive, permanent, and counterproductive effects of many aspects of our current criminal justice system, especially regarding the status and rights of pretrial detainees, minors, families of the incarcerated and those re-entering society after time spent in the system.

Currently, Connecticut's criminal justice system still promotes life-long penalties more than it does rehabilitation, creates a new class of citizens who face virtually insurmountable obstacles in obtaining safe and affordable family housing, leaves immigrants in extraordinarily vulnerable positions, facilitates easy discrimination against those who have been previously detained or incarcerated in their search for productive employment, and all but prevents those who are currently detained from accessing their legally-guaranteed rights to suffrage.

The potential proposals put forth by the Sentencing Commission are based in sound research and common sense; they work, in part, to fulfill our moral obligation to help those who have been entangled in the criminal justice system reintegrate into society as self-sufficient individuals and community members who pay taxes, take care of their families, find gainful employment, make amends for any wrongs they may have committed, and contribute to the public good. It is time that we, as a state, recognize our own misdeeds in keeping those formerly detained and/or incarcerated individuals perpetually oppressed and redress those wrongs by enacting these very basic, humane reforms.

Sincerely,

Emily J. Lehrman