

Testimony of Gretchen Raffa, MSW
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Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Inc.
In support of *An Act Concerning Misdemeanor Sentences*

To the honorable members of the Sentencing Commission, my name is Gretchen Raffa, Director of Public Policy, Advocacy and Strategic Engagement at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of *An Act Concerning Misdemeanor Sentences*. Planned Parenthood of Southern New England serves over 60,000 patients yearly for reproductive and sexual health services. As a health care provider and advocate, we believe all people should have access to high-quality, affordable health care no matter what --no matter who they are, where they live, or where they are from. Our doors are open to everyone, regardless of their immigration status.

People achieve reproductive freedom when they have full autonomy over their bodies and lives – this not only includes access to health care, but it is the ability to live in communities that are not over-policed, the ability to live without fear of having families torn apart, and to live without fear of harm from discriminatory policies. We believe that the ability to live and thrive without fear and the ability to access health care are basic human rights.

An Act Concerning Misdemeanor Sentences will reduce the maximum sentence for class A misdemeanors by a single day—from 365 days to 364 days which would limit some of the most disproportionate immigration consequences for Connecticut’s immigrants and their families. This technical fix will make a big difference in the lives of immigrants in our state and will help protect them from immigration consequences such as deportation and unnecessary involvement of the Immigration and Customs (ICE) involvement.

As we continue to witness targeted attacks on the immigrant community across this country and at our borders as the Trump administration continues to push their hateful agenda — rooted in racism and xenophobia — it is a moral imperative we act now in our state to intervene to address discriminatory policies and do what we can on the state level to stop mass incarceration and the prison-to-deportation pipeline.

This bill will send a strong message that our state is working towards addressing discriminatory policies by supporting reducing the maximum sentence for certain misdemeanors from 365 to 364 days. We cannot silently stand by as harsh immigration policies are underway to detain and deport millions of immigrants, many of whom are part of the Planned Parenthood community -- they are our supporters, patients, and staff. This legislative proposal is one way to help keep immigrant families from being separated. Planned Parenthood will continue to fight for policies that protect the rights of all people to ensure our patients and our communities have what they need to live healthy, safer and self-determined lives and that is why we urge support of *An Act Concerning Misdemeanor Sentences*.