



## State of Connecticut

### DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

#### Office of Chief Public Defender

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### Testimony of Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel

#### Government Administration and Elections Committee Public Hearing

February 15, 2019

#### Senate Bill 25

#### An Act Restoring Electoral Privileges to Felony Convicts Who Are on Parole

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports passage of **Senate Bill 25, An Act Restoring Electoral Privileges to Felony Convicts Who Are on Parole**. The bill would restore the voting rights of persons convicted of a criminal offense while on parole. Currently persons convicted of a felony cannot exercise a right to vote until they have been released from the custody of the Department of Corrections. Because custody includes confinement and time on parole supervision, individuals who have been released into the community but are still under parole supervision do not have the right to vote. Individuals who are convicted of a felony but have been released to probation are not in the custody of the Department of Corrections and are able to exercise their electoral privilege. As a member of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission, the Chief Public Defender voted in favor of this proposal to restore the right to vote to a parolee when the proposal was considered by the Sentencing Commission.

Once a person is convicted, he/she confronts not only with the sentence imposed by the court which may include incarceration, but also numerous conditions imposed by the court. In addition, to not being able to vote, there are collateral consequences that result from a conviction. These collateral consequences can include, among others, substantial difficulty in obtaining employment and housing. The current statutory prohibition against permitting parolees the right to vote as they reenter their community does not assist a parolee in his/her reintegration into the community but continues to disenfranchise him/her. Although this bill pertains only to parolees, this office hopes that there will be a continued conversation regarding the restoration of voting rights to all persons, regardless of the person being convicted and incarcerated.

Connecticut is a leader in providing substantial rehabilitation and treatment services to persons arrested and convicted of criminal offenses and believes in giving persons so convicted a second chance. This office requests that this bill receive a favorable report from this committee. Thank you.