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[www.OneStandardOfJustice.org](http://www.OneStandardOfJustice.org)

*OSJ is a volunteer-based civil rights organization committed to ensuring that persons accused or convicted of sexual offenses in Connecticut are treated constitutionally and fairly by the state before, during, and after their sentences. We believe communities are safer with rational laws and with a focus on prevention of sexual harm and the healing of all those affected by it. We believe any sexual offense is one too many.*

Esteemed Members of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus:

My name is Cindy Prizio, and I am President of One Standard of Justice (OSJ), an organization that stands up for fair and equitable treatment of those in our community burdened with the greatest stigma and injustice. We demand that those who have committed sexual offenses, as well as the survivor/victims of those offenses benefit from best practices based on sound research, and guided by democratic principles.

I am grateful for the opportunity to reach out to you as an ally and a neighbor. We share the same communities of greatest need in Connecticut: Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury. These four cities have a high number of BIPOC community members and have a disproportionately high number of families on the sex offense registry. With only 14% of the total population of Connecticut, 71% of the registered population calls these four cities home.

The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of Connecticut's policies involving returning populations with a sexual offense dramatically impacts the communities we share. Unfortunately, studies show that many of these policies are ineffective or harmful because they undermine the protective factors of safe housing, employment opportunities, access to healthcare and social support. Enforcing poverty and isolation never leads to safe or vibrant communities.

Soon, a public hearing will be held on a bill that will reduce the wasteful cycle of recidivism for individuals on the registry: SB1500, "An Act Concerning Verification of Sexual Offense Registrants' Addresses." Individuals on the registry must verify their residential address every three months by signing and returning a letter sent by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP). Current law in Connecticut dictates that if the letter is not returned within 10 days of the postmark, it is an automatic Class D felony. As a strict liability law, the homeless are automatically guilty, individuals who receive late mail are felons, and even someone hospitalized in a coma could receive a prison sentence for their lack of responsiveness.

This criminalization of a paperwork problem leads to over 200 convictions per year. Individuals and families caught up in this travesty often must post bond, hire an attorney, and can find their jobs and housing in jeopardy. Judges have signaled their lack of support for this law by giving no sentence or a suspended

sentence to 7 out of 8 convicted. Unfortunately, all those convicted are still burdened with an additional felony, and our courts are clogged with counterproductive cases.

SB1500 ensures compliance with registry requirements while reducing these harms. The bill increases the number of days to return the letter from 10 to 20 days, and allows individuals to request a second letter if the first is lost. It also directs the DESPP to offer a call in system so the homeless can verify where they reside. Most importantly, it reduces the penalty for a late returned letter to an infraction unless the individual is shown to be intentionally deceiving the state. These revisions will increase compliance, reduce wasteful enforcement efforts and remove one roadblock to individuals on the registry rebuilding their lives.

OSJ worked to advance one other bill, HB6367 “An Act Concerning Judicial Review of Probation Sentences.” That bill would enable courts to review the 10-35 years of mandatory probation that individuals with sexual offense convictions are sentenced with. Allocating resources based on risk rather than mandate would make safer communities, save the state funds, and help more people become productive citizens again. Unfortunately, we don’t believe this bill will get a public hearing this year.

Thank you for your time and OSJ hopes you will support SB1500 becoming law.

[OneStandardOfJustice.org/SB1500-One-Page](http://OneStandardOfJustice.org/SB1500-One-Page)