



# HB 6633

## Bill for Just Enforcement of Address Verifications



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### What are Address Verifications?

Individuals on Connecticut's sex offense registry are required by state law to confirm their address by returning a letter mailed by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) every three months. The signed letter must be received by DESPP within 10 days.

The statutes governing the verifications include Sec. 54-251, 54-252, 54-253 and 54-254

### How are verifications enforced?

If the address verification letter is not returned within 10 days of its postmark, the individual is determined to be 'non-compliant,' and notice is provided to the local police. In Connecticut, 'failure to verify' is a strict liability Class 'D' felony, punishable by up to 5 years in prison and/or the extension of the term of probation.

### Does the Law Work?

NO. It results in convictions of individuals who are living in a registered address but whose paperwork is simply lost or late. Addresses are verified every 90 days, so an arbitrary 10-day return requirement serves no purpose. **There is no evidence that a late verification letter is predictive of repeat sexual offenses or recidivism.**<sup>1</sup>

Enforcement is inconsistent, solely determined by the local police department. Some who are non-compliant are never arrested, others are arrested years after they became non-compliant. 44% of the 200 convicted each year face no sentence, another 43% receive suspended sentences, but the new felony<sup>2</sup> still causes harm. Many more are dismissed but the arrest still results in lost employment, legal costs and court time.

### Does the Law Cause Harm?

YES. Being strict liability with no consideration of intent, late/lost mail, personal or family illness, or other extenuating circumstances can result in prison time for people who would otherwise be productive citizens. Felony convictions result in lost employment and a reversal of years of fragile gains through rehabilitation. This hurts families and incurs significant cost to the State, clogging the courts with nearly **200 cases**<sup>2</sup> each year for non-criminal behavior, and impacts Black citizens disproportionately.

The homeless are particularly vulnerable. Without an address, they have no way to comply with the law<sup>3</sup> and can only slip further into marginalization.

### How Should it Change?

- Allow judicial discretion to classify failure to verify address as an infraction.
- Decriminalize homelessness, by allowing those without an address to call-in to Public Safety to confirm their location.

## Even a small chance of late mail becomes a likelyhood over time



Nationwide, 3% of mail is delivered after more than 7 days late.<sup>4</sup>

For life-time registrants, arrest for a Class-D felony is a near statistical certainty

## Did you know...



Compared to our neighbor states, Connecticut is the only one that doesn't offer an affirmative defense

### Disproportionate Outcomes

A review shows convictions impact Black communities more than others

	CT Population	Registered	Failure to Verify
White	63%	52%	45%
Black	11%	26%	41%
Hispanic	19%	21%	12%
Other	7%	1%	2%

## The impact

*"In December 22, 2022, I came home from work to see three squad cars in my front yard. When I asked them what they needed they told me they had a warrant to arrest me for a late letter due to late mail during COVID— four years earlier!"- SDM*

*H.L. is a disabled senior in a senior home with a conservator. He was hand cuffed and taken to a Hartford holding cell without his medications; he went into seizures and was rushed to the hospital.*

*E.V. is a senior who was offense free for 35 years and was living in the same home for 15 years, when late mail led to his arrest. On a Friday evening he was handcuffed and had to bond out using a credit card.*

### Data Sources:

- 1 Failure to Register as a Predictor of Sex Offense Recidivism: The Big Bad Wolf or a Red Herring? Kristen M. Zgoba and Jill Levenson (2012)
- 2 Dataset of all Failure to Register convictions 2021-2025 provided by Connecticut Judicial Branch
- 3 Statute requires "During such period of registration, each registrant shall complete and return forms mailed to such registrant to verify such registrant's residence address" which does not recognize those without an address
- 4 Save the Post Office Delivery Variance Report as reported by GBH News