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Good morning Honorable Robert Devlin, Commissioners Roberge, Santa and Tsarcov and all esteemed members of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission (CSC):

First I want to express our appreciation to the CSC for reopening the discussion on reform to CT's Sex Offense Registry.

The purpose of my writing is to provide you with information about recent calls for reform of the registry from groups with in-depth knowledge of the related social and legal issues and to help answer some of the questions raised at your last meeting.

Since the special committee concluded its work in 2017, much has happened in the world of research and policy of sexual offending. Two reports out have been from the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA), a multi disciplinary international organization with over 3,000 members and the American Law Institute (ALI), a prestigious research and advocacy group of judges, lawyers, and legal scholars established in 1923. The ALI writes the Model Penal Code (MPC) which judges and legislators use as a guide for legislative reform on contentious issues. Both groups have come to the conclusion that the public registry is an example of a failed public policy that needs reform. It neither prevents crime nor keeps communities safer by its presence. In fact just the opposite, Crime can rise in our communities because of the detrimental impact the registry has on people mandated to register and their families. And like the CSC, both groups struggled to balance their definitive research about the failings of the registry with their best political judgements about recommending the best steps forward. While there are some distinctions between their recommendations both ATSA and the ALI recommend a law enforcement only registry; reducing the number of registrable offenses; and reducing the number of people on it. Both the ALI and the ATSA reports included here: [ALI - Model Penal Code](#) (or read the [summary](#)) and [ATSA - Recommendations for Evidence-Based Reform](#).

At your last meeting Attorney Zito referenced “victims really want the registry. Victims want accountability.” No matter whether the harm is caused by a drunk driver, someone who robs your home or someone who sexually offends, the harm is real, deeply personal and emotional for the victim. Yet it is only those who sexually harm who are targeted for extraordinary measures - even when research continues to build an overwhelming body of evidence that such measures do more harm than good. And we know that not all victims want the same remedies for the harm they have suffered.¹

At a public hearing before the CSC in 2017, Alissa Ackerman, Ph.D., herself a victim of sexual harm, submitted testimony that, in part, read “Most survivors just want sexual victimization to stop. This requires evidence-based prevention, not knee jerk and fear-based reaction. As I usually

say ... we don't want communities to feel safe, we want communities to actually be safe. To do so means to rethink our current approaches to sexual victimization." But the legislature has created an inflexible range of non-evidence based options, which is why we, OSJ, are so grateful for your willingness to continue to search for a way forward.

Internationally respected risk evaluation expert Karl Hanson, Ph.D. says people who have been identified at first as above average risk and have lived in our communities for 12-15 years offense-free, are of no more risk than the general public.² Hanson also recommends that if there has to be a public registry, the first step would be to remove all people who are low risk. This should apply to all past and future registrants.^{3,4}

The people who offend are typically known to their victims* therefore the risk of offending is connected to social proximity rather than geographic. The authors of harm are our fathers, mothers, nephews, coaches, friends, people like you and me. Studies have shown that the person who authored the harm is known by up to 95% of the people sexually harmed, with the highest percentages being in cases involving children and adolescents.

**93% of child victims knew the person who harmed them⁵*

OSJ has been working hard to supplement the work the CSC is doing. We recently completed a series of webinars co-sponsored with Sen. Gary Winfield, which can be found on our website [here](#), targeted to the legal, legislative and social service communities as well as the general public where experts talked about their work - whether it be research, personal experience with the limited choices presented by our legal system, or the politics of change. We hope you will take the time to watch.

Sexual offending is an all-hands-on-deck issue. The primary goal is the reduction of sexual harm. In order to accomplish that we need to be able to re-allocate our limited public dollars and collective efforts from the downstream judicial system back upstream to public education, adequate resources for those who have been sexually harmed and offering meaningful alternatives for survivor victims for resolution like restorative justice.

OSJ still doesn't believe there should be a registry. But we also believe the only way to eventually get there is through collaboration. This is not a zero-sum battle between advocates and us. We have been trying to supplement the CSC's courageous work by broadening the audience through our webinars and other efforts. In order for buy-in by all parties, all parties must be at the table. We would welcome being an active, participatory partner of the CSC.

Sincerely,

Cindy Prizio
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One Standard of Justice

1. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320910176_Victims%27_Attitudes_Toward_Sex_Offenders_and_Sex_Offender_Legislation
2. <https://onestandardofjustice.org/Hanson-2018-CJB-Desistance.pdf>
3. <https://onestandardofjustice.org/sex-offense-recidivism-risk-not-what-you-think/>
4. <https://onestandardofjustice.org/webinar-politics-science-and-public-safety-is-there-common-ground/>
5. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/saycrle.pdf>