



## State of Connecticut

### DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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### Testimony of Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel, Director Office of Chief Public Defender

#### JUDICIARY COMMITTEE - MARCH 17, 2025

#### Raised Bill No. 1502

#### AN ACT CONCERNING SENTENCE REDUCTION OR RELIEF FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, STALKING OR HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports S. B. 1502, *An Act Concerning Sentence Reduction or Relief for Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking or Human Trafficking*.** The Office of Chief Public Defender is a member of the Trafficking in Person Council and the Trafficking Committee of the Connecticut Bar Association at Quinnipiac School of Law. The Office has worked collaboratively with advocates for trafficked persons to find a way to provide relief to persons who are charged with a criminal offense and who are victims of trafficking. This Office thanks this Committee and the legislature for adopting laws pertaining to vacatur for trafficked victims and resources to continue advocacy for them.

This bill is a very important step in recognizing the duress and threat that many victims of trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking face in which their conduct ultimately leads to their being charged with a criminal offense. Persons who are often themselves victims of human trafficking are sexually exploited and are prosecuted and convicted for human trafficking-related crimes.<sup>1</sup> Studies also highlight the clear links between human trafficking and violence against women, domestic violence, and the role of intimate partner violence. The bill provides for the court to hear evidence that the defendant is a survivor of trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking and that this was a

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g., United Nations - **Exploited and Prosecuted: When Victims of Human Trafficking Commit Crimes:** [https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2020/December/exploited-and-prosecuted\\_-when-victims-of-human-trafficking-commit-crimes.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2020/December/exploited-and-prosecuted_-when-victims-of-human-trafficking-commit-crimes.html). Our office would further point out that victims of human trafficking can be of more than one gender.

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Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, Legal Counsel, Director

March 17, 2025

Judiciary Committee

**Raised S. B. 1502 An Act Concerning Sentence Reduction Or Relief For Survivors Of  
Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking Or Human Trafficking**

contributing factor leading to the commission of an offense. This mitigation evidence is crucial for the court to be aware of prior to sentencing.

The bill also allows the court the discretion to depart from a mandatory minimum sentence if it finds by a preponderance of the evidence their being a survivor of such offenses was a contributing factor in their commission of the offense.

Lastly, the bill also allows for such survivors to bring this attention to the Court or the Board of Pardon and Parole in other post-conviction proceedings, thereby enabling these survivors eligibility to bring a claim forward.

In conclusion, the Office of Chief Public Defender requests this Committee to vote favorably on this bill. Thank you.