



## 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 3, 2025

#### Raised Bill No. 6968

#### AN ACT CONCERNING JUROR COMPENSATION

**The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) supports Raised H.B. 6968 - An Act Concerning Juror Compensation.** In 2019, the Connecticut Supreme Court created the **Jury Selection Task Force** to study and make recommendations that would lead to the elimination of racial and ethnic bias in the jury selection process. *State v. Holmes*, 334 Conn. 202 (2019). The *Report of the Jury Selection Task Force to Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson*<sup>1</sup> was published on December 31, 2020. The Chief Public Defender was a member of this Task Force. One recommendation was to increase the compensation and reimbursement of certain expenses of jurors to decrease any financial hardship upon an individual if selected as a juror.<sup>2</sup> This bill again proposes this particular recommendation which has not been adopted previously.

Connecticut's juror compensation is structured so individuals who are employed full time can serve as jurors. However, unemployed, and part-time or per diem employees unable to bear

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<sup>1</sup> [https://jud.ct.gov/Committees/jury\\_taskforce/ReportJurySelectionTaskForce.pdf](https://jud.ct.gov/Committees/jury_taskforce/ReportJurySelectionTaskForce.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> A subcommittee of the Task Force undertook a review of the current process by which we summon jurors in Connecticut in order to ensure that venirees are drawn from a fair cross section of the community that is representative of its diversity. The subcommittee further studied the source lists from which jurors are summoned in Connecticut and elsewhere, and also a review of the existing body of work on how other states summon jurors to ensure representative and diverse jury panels. "Why are minorities so underrepresented on jury panels? What are the factors that prevent jurors from serving? Factors like economic hardships, such as employment, childcare, transportation, and other more personal factors such as physical or mental disabilities and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) may adversely impact our jury pool in Connecticut." See generally Task Force Report: Jury Summoning Process at p. 3.

the financial hardship of not working, are unable to participate as a juror. Additionally, even individuals who have a full-time job are only paid regular wages for the first 5 days of jury service. After 5 days, current juror compensation is \$50.00 per day of service provided by the Jury Administrator - an amount of \$6.25 per hour for an 8-hour workday serving as a juror - far below our minimum wage. By providing just compensation to these individuals, and assistance for certain expenses, the system will be fairer and expand access to persons in the community to serve as jurors. This bill would provide a necessary solution while moving Connecticut further toward eradicating racial bias from the jury selection process.

The bill would amend *C.G.S. 51-247, Compensation of jurors. Guidelines re reimbursement of expenses*, permitting the juror selection process to be more inclusive of persons who are unemployed, work part time, or are unable to serve because of limited or a lack of employment compensation.

*The First Five Days of Juror Service:*

Current law provides that a juror employed full time is paid their regular wages by their respective employer for the first five days of services as such. However, jurors who are employed part time or unemployed are only reimbursed by the state for "necessary out of pocket expenses" during the first five days of jury service at a rate of 20 cents a mile, excludes food and cannot be less than twenty dollars or more than fifty dollars.

Under the bill, a juror not paid by their employer, a part time or unemployed juror will be paid a flat fee equal to the minimum wage based upon an 8-hour day. Reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenses, including mileage, are permitted for all jurors with certain restrictions and include family care at a rate set by the Jury Administrator.

*After Five Days of Juror Service:*

Current law provides that any juror serving more than 5 days is paid fifty dollars a day as long as they are not being paid by their employer. This payment is provided to part time and unemployed jurors.

Under the bill, any part time or unemployed juror, or a juror not paid by their employer, will be paid a flat fee equal to the minimum wage based upon an 8-hour day. Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses, including mileage, is permitted, excluding food. In addition, any part time or unemployed juror is also entitled to reimbursement for family care.

In conclusion, this office requests that the Committee vote **favorably** on this bill. Thank you.