



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good afternoon Chairmen McDonald and Lawlor, Ranking Members O'Neill and Kissel, and Members of the Judiciary Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you on behalf of the House Republican Caucus. We are here today for the primary purpose of discussing public safety policy. Connecticut's families are relying on us as a legislature to implement measures that will better protect them. First and foremost, we must work to improve the law to make changes to our flawed criminal justice system, and to put burglars and repeat violent offenders behind bars.

Over the last few weeks there have been a number of reports about how much it will cost to implement important changes in our criminal justice system. Money should not be our focus.

*We cannot let costs dictate public safety policy.*

The people deserve to know what the State's policy is in regard to their safety. Our duty here is clear- to implement real changes in the laws that protect individuals from harm. Therefore, I ask you to consider the following proposals, which you will find in Proposal Number 5.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL FIX

Currently our law allows judges to impose enhanced sentences on criminals who have committed multiple felonies. However, this past September, the Connecticut Supreme Court, in *State v. Bell*, found that our current persistent dangerous felony offender law, the very law we rely on to keep repeat offenders off our streets, is partially unconstitutional. The Supreme Court rightfully made the case that our Constitution requires citizen jurors, not judges, to decide the fate of convicted criminals. We agree and propose making that fix.

## HOME INVASION AND INCREASED PENALTIES FOR VIOLENT CRIMES

Our proposal seeks to address the flaws in our statutes by increasing mandatory minimums for all burglary crimes, including home invasion. We want to make it clear that Home Invasion is a violent crime, and anyone convicted of this crime should be subject to the same penalties as any other violent criminal.

Persons convicted of first and second degree burglary should be subject to an enhanced penalty under law. Burglars should be required to serve at least 85% of their sentence and be subject to GPS monitoring upon release.

### “THREE STRIKES AND YOU’RE OUT”

If we are serious about getting tough on crime, we need a true “three strikes” law. The proposal is simple: If you commit three violent crimes, you will go to prison for the rest of your life. Let me be clear – this law would be reserved for the worst of the worst—the criminals who have repeatedly committed violent crimes.

### “CASTLE DOCTRINE”

In the early morning of July 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Petit family home was violently invaded. We believe people have the right to protect their families against criminals seeking to do them harm. We propose implementing the “Castle Doctrine” which would shift the burden of deciding whether it is reasonable to use deadly force onto the criminal, not the homeowner.

## DEATH PENALTY

Prosecutors plan to pursue the death penalty in the Cheshire case. If we want to see justice served, we must make changes to our death penalty process. We propose placing more workable time limits on both defendants and the state once a person is convicted of a capital felony and sentenced to death. In addition, we propose requiring DNA testing immediately upon a defendant’s request thereby eliminating the complicated hearing process.

## CALL TO ACTION

While we could never have predicted the events that took place in Cheshire on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, it is our duty as a legislature to do everything in our power to prevent such an atrocity from happening again. We must address the flaws in our criminal justice system. It is clear legislators on both sides of the aisle are in agreement on a number of these proposals. Let’s do the right thing and get the pieces we agree upon passed now. We stand ready to work with the Committee so that the General Assembly can take action on these proposals before next session.

Thank you.