



Connecticut Legal Services



NEW HAVEN
LEGAL
ASSISTANCE
ASSOCIATION, INC.

**Appropriations Committee Testimony
from CT's Legal Services Programs
February 14, 2020**

**In Support of Governor's Proposal Authorizing
Fee Waivers for Receipt of Criminal Records**

Please accept this written testimony on behalf of CT's Legal Services Programs which include Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Connecticut Legal Services and New Haven Legal Assistance. Our organizations represent low-income individuals in civil proceedings and often assist these clients in petitioning the Board of Pardons and Parole for a full pardon. To submit a pardons application, an individual must pay for fingerprints and then they must pay \$75 to the State Police Bureau of Identification (SPBI) to obtain their official state criminal record.

For many of our clients, the \$75 fee is a significant or insurmountable barrier to accessing the pardon process. It is a Catch 22: our clients could find employment to pay for the SPBI record fee if they got a pardon, but they cannot afford to begin the pardon process because they do not have jobs that generate income to meet even their basic needs. The SPBI \$75 frustrates the realization of Second Chance for many.

We commend the Governor for proposing the implementation of a fee waiver for indigent individuals who request a SPBI report for purposes of applying for a pardon. Fee waivers are a critical means of enabling all members of our community access to all aspects of our justice system. Section 8-2 of the Rules of Superior Court could be a model for a SPBI fee waiver; it describes the process and the criteria for indigency determination. We have attached a copy of the Rule.

Thank you for supporting this budget item and proposal. If you would like to discuss this further or have questions please contact Sara Parker McKernan, at SParkerMcKernan@nhlegal.org, 203-232-2421.