

October 11, 2019

Criminal Justice Commission
300 Corporate Place
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Re: Next Chief State's Attorney

Dear Members of the Criminal Justice Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this appointment. My name is Louis L. Reed, and I am the National Organizer for #cut50 and a member of this community. #cut50 is a bipartisan organization that works with formerly and currently incarcerated individuals, community members, crime survivors, local elected officials, and law enforcement to reduce the prison population and make our communities safer.

As a national bipartisan initiative of The Dream Corps, #cut50 seeks to cut crime and incarceration across all fifty states. #cut50 is proud to be a leading voice in the effort to reform our federal and state criminal justice system through effective and compassionate legislation that recognizes the humanity of the millions of people currently behind bars and on parole or probation in America.¹

I would like to begin by acknowledging the work of Chief State's Attorney Kevin Kane and commend him for his dedication to Connecticut's criminal justice system. Specifically, for supporting Public Act 19-59², which requires prosecutors to annually provide all arrest and sentencing data for public view - bring more transparency to our prosecutorial system.

I would also like to acknowledge and personally thank Criminal Justice Commission Member Reginald Dwayne Betts for proudly representing formerly incarcerated people on the commission while also bringing hope and inspiration to those who have returned and hope to return home from incarceration. I admire your journey and respect all you've done to uplift formerly and currently incarcerated people.

As the commission begins the process of filling the Chief State's Attorney (CSA) position, I hope the members will take into consideration the following recommendations not only when considering potential candidates, but also when envisioning how the role and office should evolve in the years to come. I also want to note that these recommendations come from a place of deep understanding of the criminal justice system as someone who is formerly incarcerated.

Overall, I would recommend the Members of the Criminal Justice Commission choose a new CSA that is committed to:

¹ <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/correctionalcontrol2018.html>

² https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&which_year=2019&bill_num=880



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- Hiring prosecutors and other personnel from communities of color to ensure a prosecutorial system that mirrors the diversity of America and is less susceptible to institutional racism and implicit bias.
- Working with the relevant authorities to increase the amount of expungements of criminal records which are granted to ensure formerly incarcerated individuals can rejoin society and attain gainful employment.
- Working to de-emphasize the prosecution of non-violent offenses, as well as the prosecution of drug offenses and other crimes which would be better addressed through addiction treatment and mental health policies.
- Ensuring that law enforcement officers and other individuals who have provided compromised testimony in past criminal cases are prohibited from serving as a witness in all future cases.

In regards to the appellate bureau, the next CSA should be committed to hiring additional prosecutors to supplement the 25 current prosecutors and decrease the time incarcerated individuals await appeals of their convictions while in prison. The next CSA should also be committed to ceasing support of death penalty convictions in the appellate process and instead focus on terms of extended imprisonment.

For the civil litigation bureau, the next CSA should ensure that incarcerated and detained individuals who are challenging the lawfulness of their criminal conviction in a civil court action do not face reprisals while incarcerated for such legal action, and that these actions are taken seriously by the CSA's office so as to prevent habeas corpus violations. Also, the next CSA should guarantee prompt and non-obstructive responses to civil subpoenas of investigative and other records of the Division of Criminal Justice and other actions seeking injunctive or declaratory relief.

Lastly, under the criminal housing matters bureau, I recommend hiring a CSA that would engage in robust prosecution to promote full and prompt compliance with housing matters, which include violations of state or local building, fire, health and housing safety laws that apply to residential and commercial properties and to assure that criminal landlord-tenant laws such as criminal lockout and illegal termination of essential services are uniformly, fully and effectively enforced. Additionally, the next CSA should commit to focusing prosecutions on landlords who target communities of color as well as poor communities in discriminatory or exploitative rental practices.

It is important that the new CSA understand the significance of weighing various perspectives, including those who are formerly incarcerated. As someone who is formerly incarcerated, I cannot stress enough how important it is to have a CSA who can be empathetic, objective, and an authentic voice for those who will be returning home. I also ask that the person who fills this role conducts all policies in a transparent manner. Finally, just as this committee has recognized the great value in public perspectives, shown by this very hearing today, I hope the next person that fills this critical and meaningful role does so by not only considering the perspectives of the community, but prioritizing them.



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The criminal justice system in Connecticut and the United States at large has disproportionately affected communities of color and desperately needs reform. The qualities and policies I've outlined today would help address this imbalance and ensure the safety and dignity for all. I want to again thank this Commission for the opportunity to share my testimony and I want to thank Chief State's Attorney Kevin Kane for his 13 years of service and hard work towards changing our system.

Thank you,

Louis L. Reed

Louis L. Reed, LADC, AADC
National Organizer - #Cut50



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