



Legislative Testimony  
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**Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 653, An Act  
Concerning Open File Disclosure in Criminal Cases**

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is David McGuire, and I am executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 653, An Act Concerning Open File Disclosure in Criminal Cases.

The ACLU-CT protects the rights of all people, including people who are accused of crimes. We therefore support this bill, which would require that prosecuting officials provide people who are accused of crimes with materials they are using to try to prosecute those defendants. This allows the court process to be more open and transparent for both parties, and it would help to create a more fair and equal justice system.

Having access to the evidence that prosecutors will use against them, as well as police and arrest reports, statements made by the defendant and co-defendants, and other materials would allow people who are accused of crimes to build the best cases they can to defend themselves. It helps to equal the playing field in the courtroom by allowing people who are accused of crimes to have the same access to the same information as the prosecution. The bill also requires prosecutorial officials to provide these materials to people who are accused of crimes in electronic format if the state maintains the materials in that format. This gives people further access to the materials they need to build their cases.

In addition, nationwide, 94% of state-level criminal cases end in plea bargains. Ensuring that prosecutors share all their information with defendants and their lawyers can help people to better assess their chances in court and the plea deals prosecutors are offering. This increases the chances that these negotiations will be fair and informed for all sides.

We strongly encourage the committee to support Senate Bill 653.