



Testimony on S.207
An Act Relating to Compassionate Release and Parole Eligibility
Senate Committee on Institutions
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Thank you for allowing the Center to provide feedback on this legislation.

The Center administers the Victim Assistance Program which is comprised of the State's Attorney Victim Advocates who serve crime victims in every county. ***Several Victim Advocates have expressed concerns about the breadth of cases that would be and will become eligible for release or parole under S.207 and the absence of provisions to allow for victim participation or safety planning.***

With respect to eligibility under Section 1, Victim Advocates noted several child sexual abuse cases in which an offender would qualify for compassionate release as currently proposed—based on either physical condition or the combination of age and physical condition—*where the offender was in the same condition at the time of the offense*. Likewise, the proposal does not require risk assessment.

Section 2 of the bill, regarding eligibility for parole, would eliminate a victim's right to be heard prior to releasing an offender on parole, pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 5305(c), by virtue of mandating parole in the enumerated circumstances. ***Further, because most sentences include a minimum term, the proposed revision to 28 V.S.A. § 501(a)(2) would render many inmates eligible for mandatory parole without any risk assessment or parole conditions.***