

Judiciary Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5563 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS CRIMINAL LAW PROPOSALS.

Vote Date: 3/24/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/18/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill results from conversations between the Chief State's Attorney's Office, the Office of the Chief Public Defender, the Office of the Attorney General, the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, the CT Food Association, the CT Retail Network, the AARP, and the Pawnbroker's Association. It establishes the crime of gift card theft, modifies the provisions relating to civil liability for adults committing theft, and authorizes a representative from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to obtain, "in furtherance of their duties or responsibilities where a matter is pending in the superior court for juvenile matters where parentage is outstanding" a copy of the birth certificate from the Department of Public Health (DPH) at issue.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Patrick Griffin, Chief States' Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice: Attorney Griffin supports Sections 1 and 2 of this legislation because these legislative measures will assist law enforcement in addressing emerging criminal trends targeting retailers and are aimed at curbing what has become a rampant retail theft problem resulting in billions of dollars in retail losses annually.

Manisha Juthani, Commissioner, Department of Public Health: Commissioner Juthani supports this legislation but has concerns with section 4 as drafted because it may cause unnecessary confusion concerning to whom the Department of Public Health may release information to regarding acknowledgment of parentage (AOP). She believes that the addition of DCF to the list of eligible individuals and entities that may receive the AOP would be a more straightforward way of drafting this section without the additional administrative confusion. DPH recommends deleting "when such information is requested in furtherance of

the department's duties or responsibility in a matter pending the superior court for juvenile matters where parentage of the child is outstanding."

Chris Oakley, Assistant Public Defender, Office of Chief Public Defender: Chris Oakley supports this legislation because the proposed change improves efficiency in the establishment of parentage in Juvenile Court, which must be established for every child protection case. He explained that when parents are unable to produce a copy of the birth certificate, DCF's current process to obtain it can take weeks or months. This bill would amend CGS 46b-486 (Release of Information) to authorize a representative from DCF to obtain this information without delay. Parents who do not have access to their child's birth certificate are not entitled to visits with a child under an Order of Temporary Custody until parentage is established. He furthered that DCF and the Court are not legally obligated to consider any relatives of the alleged parent until parentage is established and the alleged parent is not considered a party to the case cannot request an administrative hearing or file motions to address any issues.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Colin Amour, Asset Protection Manager, Big Y: Colin Amour supports this legislation because it will target organized activity, not just the individual; address resale channels; establish stronger criminal penalties for gift card fraud, and strengthen tools for retail asset protection teams, law enforcement and prosecutors. He believes it addresses the escalating threats of organized retail theft, gift card fraud, and the illicit resale of stolen goods - issues that have become an increasing burden on businesses, law enforcement, and consumers alike. He believes this bill equips law enforcement, retailers, and policymakers with the tools necessary to prevent these crimes and safeguard businesses and the customers they serve.

Wayne Pesce, President, Connecticut Food Association: Wayne Pesce supports this legislation because it takes important steps to combat the rising threats of organized retail theft, gift card fraud and the illegal resale of stolen goods. He stated that the bill acknowledges that organized retail theft, gift card fraud schemes, and the trafficking of stolen merchandise are interconnected issues that need clear legal definitions. He believes increasing penalties, clarifying liability, and targeting the profiting networks will align Connecticut's approach with the challenges faced by retailers and law enforcement and if left unaddressed, it will create safety concerns for employees and contribute to higher prices.

John Wilson, Volunteer State President, AARP CT: John Wilson supports this legislation because it will target the possession, alteration, and schemes to obtain gift cards fraudulently, imposing harsher penalties to those caught engaging in such activities. By creating a legal framework that specifically addresses gift card fraud, it will help deter potential fraudsters and provide a clearer path for law enforcement to prosecute these crimes and protect consumers from financial harm.

Dermot Fitzsimons, Sr. Manager Asset Protection, Macy's Inc: Dermot Fitzsimons supports this legislation because this bill will give law enforcement and prosecutors new tools to strike back at the most sophisticated and coordinated network of people engaged in organized retail thefts.

Howard Handler, Sr. Director, National Insurance Crime Bureau: Howard Handler supports this legislation because it will help law enforcement combat the proliferation of stolen property and its use as an illicit revenue stream for organized crime.

Tim Phelan, President, Connecticut Retail Network: Tim Phelan supports this legislation because its passage is in the best interest of consumers, retailers, employees, and public safety. He stated that it provides law enforcement the tools they need in the public interest when dealing with organized retail crime networks, which have become more sophisticated, coordinated, brazen and dangerous. He believes that the provisions included will assist law enforcement in addressing emerging criminal trends targeting retailers.

Chaz Reddick, Organizer, Full Citizens Coalition: Chaz Reddick submitted testimony stating that he fully supports this legislation.

Anonymous 770: Testimony submitted without attribution was submitted in support of the bill stating that something needs to change with the justice system.

Anonymous 771: Testimony submitted without attribution was submitted in support of the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Jacqueline Olsen

Date: March 31, 2026