

**Comments of The Bronx Defenders and Reentry Net
National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws
Uniform Collateral Sanctions and Disqualifications Act
March 14, 2006**

Members of the Uniform Collateral Sanctions and Disqualifications Act Drafting Committee:

My name is McGregor Smyth, and I am the Project Director of the Civil Action Project and Reentry Net at The Bronx Defenders. I offer these comments along with Kate Rubin, Coordinator for the Reentry Net project. Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts again on the collateral sanctions and hidden punishments of the criminal justice system.

As we noted in our November 2005 comments, The Bronx Defenders offers integrated holistic services to indigent criminal defendants and their families, including criminal defense, civil legal services, social services and treatment, investigation, and youth programs. The Civil Action Project of The Bronx Defenders provides comprehensive legal services to our clients and their families by fully integrating civil representation with our criminal defense practice, working to mitigate the collateral sanctions that are the subject of the Committee's work.

Reentry Net,¹ a project of the Bronx Defenders and Pro Bono Net, is a training and support center for individuals and organizations that advocate for people who have criminal records, those reentering the community after their incarceration, and their families. We work to improve advocacy and services from arrest through release, promoting continuity of care and increasing capacity through collaboration and access to resources. Among other things, Reentry Net's online resource center hosts extensive free resources, including a clearinghouse of materials for criminal defense, legal services, social services, courts, policymakers, probation, and parole on the consequences of criminal proceedings.

We are enthusiastic about the work of your Drafting Committee on the Uniform Collateral Sanctions and Disqualifications Act (UCSDA), and offer the following comments based on our experience working with thousands of clients and hundreds of organizations that make up the reentry community. Underpinning our comments and recommendations is our definition of "reentry" as a process that begins at arrest and continues through community reintegration. This shift in the paradigm of reentry and collateral consequences highlights the substantial role that criminal defense attorneys can play in the process and expands the focus beyond convictions, so that it encompasses the consequences of criminalization faced by individuals from the moment they come in contact with the criminal justice system.

¹ Visit Reentry Net/NY at www.reentry.net/ny and our National Reentry Research & Policy Library, currently being developed with the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, at www.reentry.net.