

Written Submission on Apology Bill
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- 1) When disputes are being handled by lawyers, there can be many ways of resolving the disputes and their clients will be well protected. However, not everyone in the community can afford the service of lawyers. From the point of view of community mediation, all disputes should be resolved when they are still remaining in the community and when they have not become too complicated to be resolved. By doing this, not only the courts' effort can be saved, the society's resources in many aspects can also be saved and our society can be in a better position to achieve harmony.
- 2) Apart from lawyers, we have arbitrators and mediators nowadays. However, the public does not seem to use them for most of the community disputes. From the result of a survey led by the former Legislative Councilor Mr. Tam Yiu Chung, we can see that over 70% of the public admits that they do not understand too much about mediation and over 30% of the public even refuse to accept mediation as a means of resolving disputes. So if we want to resolve disputes in the early stage, we have to encourage people in our society to resolve the problems before they have become too large to handle. We need as many tools as possible to help people to resolve disputes as early as possible. Apology Bill is considered as an important piece of tools for help people to resolve disputes in the early stage, although one can argue that there is no solid prove of this. We are strongly supporting the introduction of Apology Bill in Hong Kong since we consider that the availability of this powerful tool will certainly place Hong Kong in a stronger position as the International Disputes Resolution Centre under the "One Belt One Road" economics development plan of China.
- 3) As to the definition of apology, we consider that a simple word 'sorry' is inadequate to let other parties appreciate the sincerity and help in resolving disputes. We support a full coverage of protection by a wider definition of apology. However, in order to avoid the misuse of the Apology Bill by some people for commercial and other reasons, we support the introduction of the court as an independent decision maker on the use of evidence.

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