



DATE: March 26, 2018
TO: Judiciary Committee
FROM: Julia Wilcox, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy
RE: [Raised SB No. 521](#) AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Good morning Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, Representative Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Julia Wilcox, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy at the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance. The Alliance is Connecticut's statewide association of community nonprofits. Our members deliver essential services to more than half a million people each year and employ almost 14% of Connecticut's workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill No. 521 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

The Alliance supports the concepts proposed in Senate Bill No. 521, which seeks to (1) require psychological testing of all applicants for employment at the Department of Correction, (2) establish the Connecticut First Chance Trust Fund, (3) permit the Commissioner of Correction to implement an employee wellness initiative, and (4) make revisions to various statutes relating to the administration of the Department of Correction.

We commend the Committee for your efforts to bring forth this legislation, which has the potential to impact citizens involved in the criminal justice system during their period of incarceration and afterwards as they reintegrate into their communities across Connecticut.

Recommendation - Section 4: The Alliance respectfully requests that an exemption be provided regarding the 1% withholding for nonprofit providers who contract with the State.

Connecticut's Community Justice Leadership

The citizens of Connecticut are fortunate in that the legislature, Department of Correction, the Judicial Branch, and Governor Malloy consistently serve as leaders on a national basis with regard to criminal justice policy. Connecticut has long been considered a national model at the forefront of overarching criminal justice reform for the innovative approaches the state has adopted - including the Second Chance Society Initiative.

The proposed legislation continues the efforts of the legislature to build upon past success, maintain momentum of the Second Chance Society Initiative, and provide the tools necessary to ensure that our returning citizens are actively engaged and invested in their reentry process, their families and their communities.

Recommendations Regarding Areas of Concern:

Section 2, Subsections 8 and 10: *While we understand that these sections represent existing law, The Alliance requests the following considerations:*

Sec. 2, (8): The Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission shall: ... Identify institution-based and community-based programs and services that effectively address offender needs and reduce recidivism including, but not limited to, education and training, employment preparation and job bank, transitional health care, family support, substance abuse, domestic violence and sexual offender programs and services.

Recommendation: *The Alliance would welcome the opportunity to participate in the process to determine the criteria upon which recommendations would be made.*

Sec. 2, (10) The Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission shall: ... Develop and annually update a plan to ensure the availability of reentry services, which plan may include establishment of community reentry centers.

Recommendation: The Alliance completely supports the establishment of community reentry centers. With that said, we recommend that the language should include a provision, by which these centers would be established in partnership with nonprofit providers with established programs, which employ best-practice, evidence-based program models. The newly developed Hartford Reentry Center, developed in partnership between the DOC and Community Partners in Action, is an incredibly well-designed model, which illustrates a strong precedence for this process.

Section 3 and Section 4: *While these sections provide for the adoption of regulations to implement and receive feedback on the types of contracts which would be subject to the 1% withholding, we request additional clarification regarding the process and implementation.*

Sec. 3: (NEW) (Effective July 1, 2018) (a) This section provides for the establishment of a fund to be known as the "First Chance Trust Fund" which shall be a separate, non-lapsing fund. The fund shall contain any moneys required by law to be deposited in the fund. Moneys in the fund shall be expended by the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission for the purpose of providing grants to evidence-based programs that benefit at-risk youth residing in any distressed municipality, as defined in section 32-9p of the general statutes.

Section 3 (C) states that the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission may (1) accept, on behalf of the fund, any moneys received by a state agency from the withholding imposed on state contracts pursuant to section 4 of this act.

Recommendation: While we support the creation of a "First Chance Trust Fund," we are concerned about the process to secure these funds, and the determination regarding which state contracts would be subject to this process (see Sec. 4 below).

Sec. 4 (a): The bill would require the Secretary of OPM to "...develop a mechanism that permits a state agency to assess a one per cent withholding on any state contract, as defined in section 4e-1 of the general statutes," exceeding one million dollars.

Recommendation: *The Alliance respectfully requests that an exemption be provided for nonprofit providers who contract with the state, to provide services on its behalf.*

As of January 1, 2018, there were 4,674 citizens of our state who were receiving community supervision from nonprofit providers who contract with the DOC. This is a 13% increase within a two - year period, while the prison population was simultaneously reduced by 13%. Thousands more receive services through providers who contract with CSSD and the Judicial Branch.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to testify in support of SB No 521, with recommendations as noted above. Please feel free to contact me with questions or for additional information.

Julia Z. Wilcox
 Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy
JWilcox@ctnonprofitalliance.org

Hartford Office: 75 Charter Oak Avenue, Suite 1-100 Hartford, CT 06106 | 860.525.5080 | Fax: 860.525.5088
 Rocky Hill Office: 35 Cold Spring Road, Suite 522 Rocky Hill, CT 06067 | 860.257.7909 | Fax: 860.257.7777