



DATE: March 10, 2021

TO: Judiciary Committee

FROM: Julia Wilcox, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy, The Alliance

RE: S.B. 987: An Act Concerning Reinvestment of Savings Achieved Through a Reduction in Correctional Facility Population into Reentry and Community-based Services and Programs

Good Morning Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Fishbein, 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). The Alliance is the statewide organization representing the nonprofit sector. Community nonprofits provide essential services to over half a million individuals and families in Connecticut every year, and employ 14% of Connecticut's workforce, improving the quality of life in communities across the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of S.B. 987: An Act Concerning Reinvestment of Savings Achieved Through a Reduction in Correctional Facility Population into Reentry and Community-based Services and Programs. This bill seeks to reinvest money saved from the closure of Northern Correctional Institution into reentry and community-based services and programs, including, but not limited to, those concerning housing and behavioral and physical health.

We commend the Committee for introducing this important legislation. The Governor has committed to the closure of Northern Correctional Institution and additional units and facilities, as outlined in the CREATES savings initiative, addressing both expense savings and revenue maximization. These proposals will achieve savings of \$15.4 million in FY22 and \$41.5 million in FY23<sup>i</sup>. However, the Budget currently proposed by the Governor does not appropriate these savings to further enhance ongoing and necessary criminal justice reforms.

The Alliance urges the committee to support S.B. 987, which will ensure the reinvestment of these savings into critical programs that focus on recidivism reduction, prison alternatives, and support for victims of crime - in keeping with the nationally recognized "Justice Reinvestment Reform" initiative. The 2019 Annual Performance Report of Louisiana's Justice Reinvestment Initiative<sup>ii</sup>, illustrates the power of reinvestment in the overall success of criminal justice reform.

Community Justice providers support justice-involved individuals and their families, as well as survivors of crime. These programs, funded by the Department of Correction and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch, continue to play an essential role in the ongoing success related to criminal justice reform in Connecticut. Unfortunately, since 2007, community nonprofits have lost at least \$461 million in state funding that has not kept pace with inflation. At the same time, demand for community services continues to increase<sup>iii</sup>.

According to the January 2021 OPM Monthly Indicators Report<sup>iv</sup>, community providers are serving approximately 4,000 people in programs which are funded by Department of Corrections – a greater than 30%

increase from 2014. Thousands more receive services through providers that contract with the Court Support Services Division of Judicial Branch.

Over the past five years, while the prison population has fallen dramatically, demand for community services for people involved in the justice system has increased. While these demands have increased over time, funding for community justice programs has been cut by nearly 15%, or \$5.8 million (with no increase in the proposed budget for 2022-2023). Throughout the pandemic, nonprofit providers have played essential roles in the ability of the DOC and CSSD, to safely and securely manage the justice- involved population.

Nonprofit providers have worked tirelessly with their state agency partners, to continue to manage the programmatic needs, as well as the Covid-related healthcare needs of both clients and staff. Providers have developed quarantine and/or isolation space as required, in addition to managing the additional responsibilities when CDC protocol prevented clients from leaving the residential facilities. The commitment of the nonprofit provider community greatly enhanced the ability of the DOC and CSSD/JUD, to contain the COVID-19 positivity rate within community programs.

Once again, The Alliance urges the committee to support S.B. 987, which will ensure the reinvestment of the cost savings associated with right-sizing Connecticut’s correctional capacity. The ability of the state to ensure continuation of the criminal justice reforms that have positioned Connecticut as a national leader, is greatly dependent on a sustainable system of services, as provided by the nonprofit sector.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues.

Julia Z. Wilcox, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy

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<sup>i</sup> Governor Lamont’s February 2021 Budget Proposal for the FY 2022 – FYI 2023 Biennial Budget, B-70: [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/Budget/2022\\_2023\\_Biennial\\_Budget/Bud\\_WebPage/GovBud\\_2022-23\\_Final\\_Web\\_Update.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/Budget/2022_2023_Biennial_Budget/Bud_WebPage/GovBud_2022-23_Final_Web_Update.pdf).

<sup>ii</sup> Louisiana’s Justice Reinvestment Reforms - 2019 Annual Performance Report (pages 19-27): <https://gov.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/CJR/2019-JRI-Performance-Annual-Report-Final.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> White Paper of The Alliance: Increase Funding by \$461 Million for Community Nonprofits: <https://ctnonprofitalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-White-Paper-Increase-Funding-by-461-Million.pdf>.

<sup>iv</sup> January 2021 OPM Monthly Indicators Report: [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/CJPPD/CjResearch/MonthlyIndicators/2021-MONTHLY-INDICATOR-REPORTS/MonthlyIndicatorsReport\\_Jan\\_-2021.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/CJPPD/CjResearch/MonthlyIndicators/2021-MONTHLY-INDICATOR-REPORTS/MonthlyIndicatorsReport_Jan_-2021.pdf)