



DATE: February 22, 2022

TO: Committee on Commerce

FROM: Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy & Division Advisor, The Alliance

RE: SB 101: An Act Concerning Workforce Development Programs for Incarcerated Persons and Persons Reentering the Community After Incarceration

Good Morning, Senator Hartley, Representative Currey, Senator Martin, Representative Buckbee, and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee:

My name is Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy & Division Advisor at the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide association of community nonprofits. Community nonprofits provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut, serving over half a million people in need and employing 115,000 people across the State. They are an important part of what makes Connecticut a great place to live and work and an important piece of our economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 101: An Act Concerning Workforce Development Programs for Incarcerated Persons and Persons Reentering the Community After Incarceration

The Alliance supports the measures that this bill seeks to implement, including the requirement for the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development to:

1. Evaluate workforce development programs for incarcerated persons and persons reentering the community after incarceration, and
2. Create an employer toolkit to facilitate such persons' employment.

We commend the Committee for introducing this legislation and acknowledging the importance of workforce development programs for incarcerated persons and persons engaged in the reentry process after incarceration. The National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction references more than 550 collateral consequences for those living with a criminal record.ⁱ SB 101 would be an important step in addressing issues related to meaningful employment, which are among the most impactful consequences. We respectfully recommend that the Committee adds language in the bill to include the perspectives of formerly incarcerated individuals, as well as nonprofit job developers, in this important process.

Enhancing employment opportunities would also improve public safety by reducing recidivism rates, and improve the fiscal outlook not only for these individuals and their families, but for communities across the state.

One in three Americans has some type of criminal record, which can create lifelong barriers to opportunity for them and their families. A criminal record should not be a life sentence to poverty. People who have served their time deserve a fair opportunity for a better future. To better achieve equity, especially across race and income, barriers to employment, education, and housing must be removed.

Most criminal justice research focuses on the effectiveness of programs that seek to reduce recidivism by changing offender attitudes and behavior. Reductions in recidivism translate to breaking the cycle of crime and

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

In addition to the proposed legislation, we urge your continued support of reentry services within the community which are essential to the ongoing success of the previous Second Chance Society Initiative. According to the January 2022 OPM Monthly Indicators Reportⁱⁱ, community providers are serving approximately 3,300 people in programs which are funded by Department of Corrections. Thousands more receive services through providers that contract with the Court Support Services Division of Judicial Branch.

Community nonprofits in Connecticut work to reintegrate former offenders into their communities. 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.

Once again, The Alliance urges the committee to support SB 101. 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, Senior Public policy & Division Advisor

JWilcox@ctnonprofitalliance.org

i National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction:

https://niccc.csgjusticecenter.org/database/results/?jurisdiction=260&consequence_category=&narrow_category=&triggering_offense_category=&consequence_type=&duration_category=&page_number=1

ii January 2022 OPM Monthly Indicators Report: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/CJPPD/CjResearch/MonthlyIndicators/2022-MONTHLY-INDICATOR-REPORTS/Monthly-Indicators-Report-2022-January.pdf>