



CONNECTICUT BUSINESS & INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

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TESTIMONY OF
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VICE PRESIDENT AND ECONOMIST
CONNECTICUT BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
MARCH 19, 2010
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Good day. My name is Pete Gioia. I am the economist for the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA). CBIA represents about 10,000 firms, which employ about 700,000 women and men in Connecticut. Our membership includes firms of all sizes and types, the vast majority of which are small businesses with fewer than 50 people.

CBIA would like to comment upon the following bills SB 475 and HB 5523. Continued budget problems plague the state but alarmingly OFA projects \$3 billion plus shortfalls in FYs 2012-14. Obviously extraordinary measures to improve efficiencies are paramount concerns if the state is to avoid massive tax increases that would derail fragile economic recovery.

SB 475

CBIA supports this bill. Our Government Affairs Program this year recommends that the state begin a comprehensive effort at prison reform, this bill is a positive step in that direction. The state needs to aggressively take measures to reduce recidivism. Placing non violent offenders in a general prison population may lead to creating a future violent offender through association

with such individuals. Solid support services and close monitoring of non violent offenders may lead them on the path to a productive life as a tax paying citizen. These services cost \$15-18,000 per year vs. \$32-40,000 for prison.

HB 5523

CBIA supports Section 1 but has concerns about Section 3. Obviously an ex offender with a job is more likely to be a good citizen than one without means of self support. The bill in Section 1 may entice an employer to take a chance on hiring an ex-offender. But, we have concerns about the broad, mandated change in Section 3. We realize that many employers have great concerns about hiring ex offenders, while others have done so and been very happy with that choice. A serious education effort is needed to convince reluctant employers to take a chance on ex offenders who really want to change their ways. We are currently working with groups – such as the Knights of Maltas’s Prodigal Project to do this educational outreach. We feel, in time, Section 3 will be a moot point as employers recognize they can be a real part of this solution. However, we feel that though well intentioned Section 3 is not the best way to approach the problem.

Given the herculean budget challenges of 2012-14 the General Assembly needs to act now to defuse potential future deficiency problems and avoid making any problems bigger at the state or local levels.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.