

Good morning, Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan, and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.

My name is Beatrice Codianni and I am the managing editor for the website ReentryCentral.org. The mission of Reentry Central is to provide a centralized national news and information site in the fields of ex-offender reentry and related criminal justice areas. Its intent is to foster the improvement of criminal justice techniques designed to decrease the use of incarceration for non-violent offenders, and to help provide more effective reentry services to those who have been incarcerated.

My commitment to reentry and criminal justice issues stems from my personal experience. I have firsthand experience in the criminal justice system, having been incarcerated on RICO charges by the Federal Bureau of Prisons for 15 years. While incarcerated, I served as a consultant to the Director of the University of Connecticut's Institute for Violence Reduction, and spent my time advocating for inmates. I am a native of New Haven, CT, and a member of the New Haven Reentry Roundtable.

I appear before you today to support a gun offender registry act ("GORA") which would require individuals convicted of certain gun crimes to register with local police departments for two years after release from incarceration.

Recognizing that guns are responsible for most murders in New Haven, the focus of this proposal is to keep guns out of the city, and to track those who have been convicted of a crime involving a gun. This idea is not new, as New York, Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and Utica have also enacted GORA, with success.

Under GORA, a person who used a gun during the commission of a crime, or was in illegal possession of a firearm, would be mandated to register with the police for a defined period of time. I believe that this time frame should be limited to two years. This time frame is crucial because studies have shown that those convicted on a gun charge are more likely to commit another crime during their first two years of release from incarceration.

A person who is mandated to register would be required to do so upon release from custody. Providing his or her name, home address, work or school address every six months would allow the police to keep a more accurate tracking record of the individual, and would contribute to public safety. Failure to register would result in a new misdemeanor charge. The names of those who register would not be made public (as is the case with registered sex offenders) and would be removed from the list at the completion of the designated time period.

For this proposal to succeed, law enforcement must work with city and state agencies to link registered offenders with agencies or organizations that can provide needed services. Not only would the police officers of New Haven have a better way to track those who register, but service providers would also be connected with formerly incarcerated

persons. Lack of employment, unsafe or unstable housing, and lack of access to mental health and substance abuse programs are all areas those returning to their communities face, and those issues play a major role in recidivism.

Concerns may be raised that GORA is just another way to stigmatize those who were arrested and served their sentences, but I see it as a way for ex-offenders to take responsibility for their past crimes, and to be accountable for their future actions. With gun violence plaguing the nation's cities, GORA has the potential to play a part in reducing senseless murders.

I thank you for your time and consideration of this issue. If you have any questions for me, I would be happy to answer them at this time.