

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 Amy Meek and I am the Coordinator of the City of New Haven's Prison Reentry Initiative. Launched in 2008, the Prison Reentry Initiative works with community partners, state agencies and other reentry stakeholders to support the reintegration of formerly incarcerated residents into the New Haven community.

I appear before you today in support of proposed bills SB 695 and HB 6185, which would create a gun offender registry. These bills would require individuals convicted of certain gun crimes to register their name and address with the local police departments for the municipalities in which they reside. HB 6185 would require these individuals to renew their information once a year, for a total of five years. Failure to comply with the registration requirements would be a misdemeanor.

The gun offender registry proposal is modeled on the successful implementation by other cities seeking to reduce gun violence in recent years. New York City enacted the first gun offender registry act in 2006. Other cities quickly followed: Baltimore enacted a similar law in 2007, and Washington D.C. and Utica, NY enacted laws in 2009.

Research consistently shows that the most cost-effective and efficient strategy for reducing recidivism rates is, first, to identify the highest-risk population and, second, to focus community supervision and treatment resources on that population group. For example, a report issued just a few days ago by the Council of State Governments Justice Center named a focus on individuals most likely to reoffend as one of their four fundamental strategies to reduce crime, recidivism, and corrections costs.<sup>1</sup>

In Connecticut, the population most likely to reoffend is the population of individuals convicted for weapons offenses. Among individuals with criminal histories in Connecticut, those sentenced for weapons offenses recidivate at significantly higher rates than those sentenced for non-weapons-related crimes. Research by the state Office of Policy and Management shows that gun offenders are more likely to be high-risk offenders, and more likely to commit violent offenses than individuals convicted of other crimes.<sup>2</sup>

A gun offender registry will thus allow local and state agencies to identify a high-risk population that is more likely to recidivate than other individuals with criminal convictions. By tracking addresses and contact information, the registry would enable local and state agencies to focus limited resources for community supervision and treatment on this high-risk population. First, local law enforcement would meet with individuals convicted of weapons offenses, providing a deterrent effect by informing

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<sup>1</sup> Clement, Schwarzfeld, and Thompson, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, THE NATIONAL SUMMIT ON JUSTICE REINVESTMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY: ADDRESSING RECIDIVISM, CRIME, AND CORRECTIONS SPENDING (January 2011), available at [http://justicereinvestment.org/files/JR\\_Summit\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://justicereinvestment.org/files/JR_Summit_Report_Final.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management and the CT Statistical Analysis Center, RECIDIVISM AND WEAPONS (August 2010), available at [http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjcjpac/recidivism\\_and\\_weapons\\_report.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjcjpac/recidivism_and_weapons_report.pdf).

high-risk individuals that they are on law enforcement's radar. Second, law enforcement can partner with other agencies and community resources to provide targeted services to these high-risk individuals in their first few weeks and months after release.

This kind of partnership between law enforcement, city and state agencies, and community-based resources is already established in New Haven, and a gun offender registry would enable us to better target our limited resources towards the population most likely to reoffend. The City's Reentry Initiative recently launched the Community Transition Teams Initiative in New Haven, which builds on relationships with community providers and collaborates with police, parole, and probation departments to help individuals with criminal convictions and their families access neighborhood-based transitional services. A resource fair for Fair Haven-based individuals and families launched this initiative on November 17. Parolees living in the Fair Haven neighborhood were required to report to their parole officer at the resource fair, which was held at the neighborhood police substation. They were encouraged to bring family members and children as well. Ten community resource organizations offered bilingual assistance and services with employment, housing, child care, adult education, youth programs, health and on-site medical checkups, and child support. Over half of the participants took advantage of at least one program or service offered at the fair.

A gun offender registry would enable the Community Transition Teams Initiative to target resources at the population most likely to reoffend. Moreover, the registry would enable communities to target services towards high-risk individuals released from incarceration at the end of their sentences, without supervision by parole or probation. While the end-of-sentence population comprises at least one-quarter of those released from incarceration in Connecticut, they are unsupervised by a parole or probation officer and thus are often less likely to be connected with services in the critical first weeks and months after release. Research suggests that local and state government agencies should collaborate with community providers to concentrate resources on the period immediately following an individual's release from incarceration.<sup>3</sup> Because the end-of-sentence population does not have the opportunity to access services through parole or probation referrals, they are often unaware of the resources available to them in the first few weeks and months after release. As a result, recidivism rates for the end-of-sentence population in Connecticut are significantly higher than for those on parole or probation.<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion, I support a gun offender registry in Connecticut that would enable communities such as New Haven to identify a high-risk population and then focus community supervision and treatment resources on that population through partnerships with law enforcement, city and state agencies, and community providers.

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<sup>3</sup> See Council of State Governments, *Report of the Re-Entry Policy Council* (Jan. 2005), Policy Statement 26, available at <http://www.reentrypolicy.org/publications/1694;file>.

<sup>4</sup> State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management, Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division, 2010 ANNUAL RECIDIVISM REPORT (February 15, 2010), available at [http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjresearch/recidivismstudy/2010\\_0215\\_recidivismstudy.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjresearch/recidivismstudy/2010_0215_recidivismstudy.pdf).

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.

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