



# Trinity College

HARTFORD CONNECTICUT

March 7, 2012

To the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

I am writing concerning Bill S.B. 286 that proposes to exempt colleges and universities offering credit-bearing college courses at Connecticut state prisons from the necessity of becoming state contractors. As a professor at Trinity College and someone who has been doing arts residencies at York Correctional Institution for the past seven years, I have seen first hand the importance of education for the women there. Educational opportunities can be key to pivotal changes in the women's outlook and perspectives—changes that have been shown to deeply affect their positive reentry into the community.

It is important to note that studies have shown that educational programs in prison have significantly reduced recidivism rates for participants. These programs not only provide skills and information that better prepare the inmate to find employment upon release, but, more importantly, cultivate intangible and immeasurable qualities that are necessary for genuine transformation: critical thinking, humility, and, above all, dignity. Especially in higher education programs, inmates are exposed to the rich history of ideas as well as the broad scope of contemporary events, issues, and debates—an exposure that inevitably offers new horizons of possibility that can inspire and encourage transformation. If we are to seriously address the problems of the prisons in our country, education must play a key role.

I have been working for the past three years with Associate Dean Sheila Fisher at Trinity to implement a credit-bearing seminar at York. We have received all approvals from the Trinity end and the course is in the process of being taught at York this semester by a group of Trinity faculty. The only holdup on credit for the course is the rather involved process of becoming a state contractor. However, this course is essentially being offered at no cost to the state—the faculty time is being paid for through College resources. It seems that the most efficient and effective way to make it possible to have a program of courses like this made possible by the very excellent faculty and resources of colleges and universities throughout the state, is to waive the state contractor status and support educational access that is pivotal to growth, development and successful reentry.

Ninety-five percent of all inmates return to our communities. Education can facilitate successful return and help to stop the cycle of recidivism that we face in our state and our country. Thank you for your positive consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Judy Dworin".

Judy Dworin  
Professor, Department of Theater and Dance

DEPARTMENT OF THEATER & DANCE

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