

March 9, 2012

Testimony of Lynda Popoola, Masters Student at The University of Connecticut School of Social Work, in support of S.B 286: "An Act Exempting Institutions of Higher Education that Offer Free Courses to Inmates from State Contracting Requirements".

Dear Honorable Senators and Representatives:

Institutions of Higher Education should be permitted to offer free courses to inmates without having to register as a state contractor. I believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to be educated, even if their past reflects wayward and unacceptable behaviors. As a people, we should work towards helping inmates regain their strength and esteem.

Courses such as reintegration into society, GED prep courses, and resume workshops, are some examples of the variety of courses that professors would be willing to partake in teaching if the process of becoming a state contractor was omitted, or shortened.

As a Social Worker, one of our Core Values is the Dignity and Worth of a Person. We believe that everyone deserves help no matter what he/she has done. How awesome would it be to encourage, teach and educate these individuals whose dignity has been taken away from them as a result of their own actions.

Every University has a state contract that they must sign in order to receive accreditation. Signing the state contract for the free courses might create some conflict with each institutions contract for accreditation. This means Lawyers would be involved, filing of work force reports, tiresome requirements, as well as filing non-discrimination certificates. This process is long and should not be mandatory especially because the services will be offered voluntarily.

We all know knowledge is power, and studies show that providing educational opportunities to prisoners reduces recidivism from 20 – 60%. If the contract process was eliminated more Institutions will participate in alleviating the statistics of released prisoners who end up back in prison. The courses they would be taught, and encouragement they would receive, would pave the way to them having a real second chance at life and many opportunities.

Thank You.

Lynda Popoola

UConn MSW 2012

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Dennis J. Stevens & Charles S. Ward, (1997) "College Education and Recidivism".