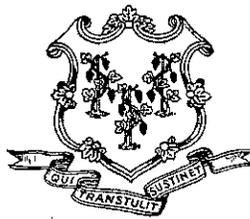


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Good afternoon Senator Leone, Representative Hennessy, and members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I am here today to testify in favor of SB 114, AN ACT CONCERNING PRETRIAL DIVISIONARY PROGRAMS and SB 251, AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS' JOBS

SB 114, would allow certain veterans who have committed specific non-violent offenses to participate in pretrial diversionary programs twice. Under current law, most offenders can use this program only once; in 2008 the General Assembly made a change in the law to allow those with psychiatric disorders a second chance in certain situations. Many veterans face a difficult transition back to civilian life and may need additional assistance in this transition; we owe them at least this support.

This proposed legislation recognizes that treatment is preferable to incarceration and provides additional ways that our state can seek community-based treatment for certain non-violent offenders. All of Connecticut's citizens benefit when we encourage people who have made mistakes to remain productive members of our society by providing the support and services that they require. Many of these services are most effective when administered by community based providers who possess insight into specific issues involved

with the offender. This legislation would allow treatment services for veterans to be provided by the Department of Veterans' Affairs which is the agency most familiar with the struggles faced by this population. It is good public policy to provide the kinds of services that keep non-violent offenders in positive living conditions and out of homeless shelters and prisons. This approach benefits both the offender and all of society.

SB 251 would assist veterans who are seeking jobs; this bill is similar to language in sections 5 and 6 of SB 1 of which I am a co-sponsor. It is well documented that when veterans return to civilian life, they face many extraordinary challenges, not the least of which is finding and adjusting to civilian employment. This bill would create, within the state Department of Labor, an Unemployed Armed Forces Member Subsidized Training and Employment Program. The program would provide grants to small businesses that hire qualified veterans. These grants would be used to subsidize part of the cost of on-the-job training and compensation expenses incurred by the business for the first six months that the veteran is employed by the company. This provision would assist both small businesses and veterans as well as address our desire to lower the rate of unemployment.

Thank you for raising these important proposals which will do much to assist veterans to achieve a successful transition back into civilian life.