



A Better Way Foundation is a Connecticut non-profit organization that is dedicated to a sensible shift in drug policy from one of incarceration to substance abuse treatment and public health.

www.abwfct.org

In Favor of Raised House Bill 5594: AN ACT CONCERNING DIVERSIONARY PROGRAMS

Good morning distinguish members of Judiciary Committee,

A Better Way Foundation has worked with various system providers over the last year to create policies that will continue to address public safety while individuals suffering from substance use disorder get the services needed for a successful life. A Better Way Foundation has a Four Pillar Approach to Community Revitalization: Health Equity, Equal Justice, Economic Security and Public Safety. House Bill 5594: An Act Concerning Diversionary Programs addresses each of our Pillars. On January 1, 2014 A Better Way Foundation released the [Public Wellness Memo: Diversion and Discharge A Model for Community Revitalization Coordinating the Affordable Care Act Implementation, Drug Policy and Criminal Justice Reform](#). This memo address the how the ACA, drug policy and criminal justice intersect with one another and how certain changes to the system can save money without jeopardizing social norms.

1. There were more than 720,000 people living at or near poverty in Connecticut in 2010.¹
2. As of July 1, 2013, there were 45,221 people on probation.²
3. As of March 2013 an average of 1,706.5 people are released per month from Connecticut's prisons.³

A Better Way Foundation supports **ALL** of the recommended changes for diversionary programs, which includes expanding judicial discretion and programs for anger management. These new changes allow those suffering from substance use disorder opportunities for support and treatment without the penalty of prison. Furthermore, it addresses the fact that relapse is a part of recovery and gives a person another chance. In Connecticut 80% of the prison population has a substance use related crime. Majority of this population come from poor communities in our state. Waiving fees for those indigent defenders and sealing records during the treatment phase, and dismissing charges after completion of programs is the ideal way to getting Connecticut's taxpayers, families, employees and employers back on track to success. As we all know in today's society a misdemeanor can cause you to lose out on employment and/or housing prospects. Please support **Raised House Bill 5594: AN ACT CONCERNING DIVERSIONARY PROGRAMS.**

Respectfully,

LaResse Harvey, BSW
Director of Strategic Relations

¹ Meeting the Challenge: The Dynamics of Poverty in Connecticut, released January 2013

² State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division Adult Probation - Quarterly Caseload Snapshot, released July 2013

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³ Mike Lawlor, Undersecretary Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division Office of Policy and Management, 'RREC – The Administration's Perspective'