



## **State of Connecticut**

**African-American Affairs Commission**

**State Capitol**

**210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509**

**Hartford, CT 06106**

**860-240-8555**

Good Afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas, Honorable members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Subira Gordon and I am the legislative Analyst for the African American Affairs Commission. I am writing today to support RB 153 AAC the Recommendations of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission with Respect to Certificates of Rehabilitation.

There are many barriers that African Americans face when trying to find employment in the State of CT. The unemployment rate for African Americans is 12.2% while for Caucasian residents the rate is 7.7 %. One of the factors that have helped to create this disparity is the alarming rate of African Americans that are arrested and convicted of crimes resulting in a criminal record which then creates a barrier to finding employment. 42% percent of the prison population in Connecticut is Black or African American. This bill would help many of these individuals access employment upon as a part of their re-entry to the community.

This proposal allows ex-offenders who have demonstrated rehabilitation to be granted a certificate of rehabilitation by the Board of Pardons and Paroles or the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch. The certificate is similar to a provisional pardon which is also granted by the Board and would be revoked if an individual is later convicted of a crime. As proposed, private and public employers would be prohibited from denying employment or

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*To improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut*

granting a licensee to an applicant, discharging or discriminating against an employee or potential employee solely based on a conviction for which an individual has been granted a certificate. The certificate is not an absolute pardon for the crime however it eliminates one of the barriers to employment faced by African Americans who are convicted of a crime.

The disproportionate representation of African Americans in the criminal justice system is directly related to the achievement gap and housing segregation problem in Connecticut. If we give individuals access to employment this will be a step in the right direction and possibly a way to make strides in creating a more equal Connecticut.

The AAAC is pleased with section (l) of this bill that requires the board to submit data to the Office of Policy and Management which will be critical for analysis and future possible reforms in the criminal justice system.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Subira Gordon', written in a cursive style.

**Subira Gordon**

**Legislative Analyst**

**African American Affairs Commission**