

Testimony of Chloe Duhaime from Lebanon, CT
Planning and Development Committee
Public Hearing-February 27, 2015-11am LOB Room 2A

Opposed to SB No. 878: An act requiring community notification of new residential facilities for offenders.

Hello Senator Osten, Representative Miller and honorable committee members. My name is Chloe Duhaime and I am a resident and voter of Lebanon, CT. I am here today as a citizen and soon-to-be master of social work to express my opposition to Proposed Senate Bill 878: An act requiring community notification of new residential facilities for offenders.

Let me first explain the existing difficulties reentering individuals face upon release from incarceration.

- **Stigma:** Reentering individuals face a sharp degree of stigma due to their previous status as convicted criminals.
- **Employment:** They often have great difficulty obtaining a job due to this stigma as well as parole requirements that limit their hours of availability for work.
- **Housing:** Considering the difficulties of finding and maintaining employment, it is incredibly difficult for reentering individuals to find affordable and adequate housing.
 - **Family:** These difficulties are amplified when reentering individuals are not permitted to live with their families if their families are housed under HUD. Families living under HUD face eviction for associating with people involved in drug related offenses. Beyond this regulation limiting housing options, it limits reentered individuals' access to their families and the unlimited social, financial and emotional support that goes with them.

Sociologists are familiar with the way people fear "others" not like them. When individuals reenter from incarceration, they have been held apart from society in such a way that makes them "the other" to the general population. The fears and assumptions that go with this contribute to the stigma that affects the successful reentry of individuals as I have very briefly explained.

It is to be assumed that parole boards and the Commissioner of Correction do their jobs well. Therefore, when the decision is made to release prisoners, it should be believed that those individuals are rehabilitated and have repaid their debts to society. The many difficulties they face despite this, are unwarranted, continued, and arguably cruel and unusual punishment.

If proposed senate bill 878 is passed, it will exasperate these hardships on our newly reentered citizens. Devastating effects will result from giving the opportunity for municipalities to create public fear around the much needed, initial homes of reentered citizens. For instance:

- It will be more difficult for reentered citizens to get interviews due to employers recognizing their address as a living cite for ex-offenders.
- Community outcry may manipulate the placement of such homes to be in areas with few opportunities to build reputable livelihoods.
- The social stigma attached to these individuals will follow them around their homes. Carrying that stigma constantly can affect their ability to pursue fulfilling lives.

I hope you will take these arguments into consideration. Thank you.