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Testimony Presented Before the Appropriations Committee:

Submitted By: Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Specialist, CT Nonprofits

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H.B. No. 6824: The Governor's Proposed FY 2016-2017 Biennial Budget

In Opposition- With Recommendations - Related to DOC/CSSD

Good Evening, Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee: I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony this evening. My name is Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Specialist for the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CT Nonprofits.) CT Nonprofits is a membership organization that represents more than 500 mission-based, nonprofit agencies. This testimony is presented on behalf of the Community Justice Division of CT Nonprofits who contract with DOC and/or CSSD.

For years, nonprofit providers have come before you and testified in favor of expanding treatment programs and alternatives to incarceration. Support and expansion of Reentry Programs have historically served as an extensive cost savings measure, which not only increases public safety, but strengthens the very fabric of our communities. As you continue your efforts to address the state budget crisis, it is essential to view the support of community-based, reentry services (as provided by the nonprofit provider network) not as an 'expense,' but rather, an 'investment' in social justice, human capital and the welfare of our state.

Governor Malloy is to be commended for his vision with regard to the proposed '**Second Chance Society Initiatives.**' These initiatives are designed to continue the progress being made in reducing the state's dropping crime rate, which is currently at a 48-year low, as well as ensuring nonviolent offenders are successfully reintegrated into society and become productive and fulfilled members of their communities and contribute to Connecticut's economy. They will help to break the cycle of crime and poverty that impacts all too many families and communities. These policy initiatives come as a new, bipartisan national consensus is building behind a Second Chance Society in states across the country, including in Texas, Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama.

The proposed 'Second Chance Society Initiatives' shall be reflected in the following five key areas:

- * Reclassifying certain nonviolent offenses
- * Eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug possession
- * Streamlining our parole system to make it more efficient and effective
- * Streamlining our pardons system to give the formerly incarcerated a greater chance at employment
- * Creating real job and housing opportunities for the formerly incarcerated

On behalf of the nonprofit provider reentry community, CT Nonprofits urges your continued support of the Second Chance Society Initiatives. With that said: It is critical to acknowledge that the state's ability to effectively achieve any of the goals set forth is directly related to the strength and viability of the Nonprofit Provider network of Community Justice Services.

The provider network has a long standing and increasingly collaborative relationship with both the Department of Correction (DOC) and the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch. We are extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to work in partnership with Commissioner Semple, (DOC) and Executive Director Grant (CSSD) – and their respective administrations. Each leader provides a unique vision for the future of reentry services within their purview. The success within both State entities is reflected in the data that places CT at the forefront on the national stage.

CT Nonprofits urges your consideration regarding the following areas of concern:

1. Transfer of Adult Probation Functions of CSSD to DOC: Governor Malloy has proposed the transfer of the adult probation functions of CSSD to DOC. (Note: CT Nonprofits and our members have previously testified in opposition to the transfer of juvenile probation functions of CSSD to the DCF.) There are so many positive aspects of the Second Chance Society Initiative. Unfortunately, the transition of these services from CSSD to DOC in our opinion would not be an efficient nor effective way to achieve the stated goals. To be clear – while we oppose the transition, DOC and community providers currently partner to provide an intensively effective system of both residential and non-residential services. Concerns related to the proposed transfer fall under the following categories:

1A. Cultural Differences between DOC and CSSD: While the DOC infrastructure and philosophy have become increasingly ‘reentry-oriented’, simply put - the philosophies associated with correction are very different than the philosophies associated with diversion and alternatives. Each entity has a proven level of proficiency in their area of concentration. However, to attempt to ‘blend’ them, given the current respective infrastructures, could lead to a reversal of the excellent outcomes that have taken so long to methodically and systematically develop.

1B. Necessary Data Collection/IT Infrastructure & Support: A primary component to the state’s ability to gauge the success of the community justice system is the ability to develop reliable data that accurately reflects outcome measures. The Contractor Data Collection System (CDCS) developed over many years by CSSD, has become not only increasingly sophisticated but also provides for quality assurance of data which represents the exceptional work performed by each contractor. Statistical reports are developed and formal audits verify that the data matches manual files, client reporting records, group attendance, program completion and even staff engagement – to name just a few metrics. The DOC certainly has outcome measures which providers must meet within their programs and the RBA aspect of programs within DOC continues to evolve. However, the level of technological proficiency, systematic review of outcomes to improve client services and support is currently not a level equal to CSSD. The provider network has become more proficient, are held to a higher standard, and as a result, we are seeing results at the client level, results that directly impact recidivism and reflect favorably on our communities – and the State of Connecticut.

2. Chronic Under-funding of the Nonprofit Provider Network: Providers are true ‘partners’ in the success that the state has experienced in the criminal justice arena, which has positioned the accomplishments of the state on the national stage. Unfortunately, the state budget has not reflected the true cost of providing these essential and critically acclaimed services. The cost of living adjustments (COLAs) reflected in the state budgets average less than 1% over the past twenty five years. This is a trend that simply cannot continue if the state is to realize the significant goals set forth.

It would appear that among the goals of the proposed transition, is an increased level of efficiencies and cost saving measures. From our perspective, we have not been able to establish exactly how these two areas would be accomplished. Among the recommendations recommended coordination and standardization of contracting services may be found in the Governor's Nonprofit Cabinet report (2014). This report offers options for establishing a consistent framework. The Cabinet's recommendations were developed through joint efforts between state agencies and nonprofit leaders who hold Purchase of Service Contracts.

Recommendations Moving Forward:

1. While CT Nonprofits stands in complete support of the Department of Correction, we respectfully OPPOSE the proposed transfer of Adult Probation functions of the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch, to the Department of Correction (DOC.)
2. Provide adequate funding that reflects the true cost of services and addresses the chronic under-funding of the Nonprofit Provider Network (current Cost of Living Adjustments which average less than 1% over twenty years.)
3. Adopt and implement the recommendations of the [Governor's Cabinet on Nonprofit Health and Human Services](#) (2014), related to the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch. Specifically - Coordination and standardization of contracting services. The final report of the Cabinet offers options for establishing a consistent framework. (The Cabinet's recommendations were developed through joint efforts between state agencies and nonprofit leaders who hold Purchase of Service Contracts.)

I thank you for your time and consideration of these critically important issues. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time, with questions, or for additional information:

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