

Testimony of Louise DiCocco  
Assistant Counsel  
to the Judiciary Committee  
March 13, 2015

RE: Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 952, AAC A Second Chance Society

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today in support of many of the principles behind S.B. 952, AAC A Second Chance Society. My name is Louise DiCocco and I am Assistant Counsel at Connecticut Business Industry & Association (CBIA), which represents more than 10,000 large and small companies throughout the state of Connecticut.

S.B. 952 embodies many of the criminal justice reforms recommended in the Connecticut Institute for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century report that will bring about necessary changes in prison reform. Prison reforms offer Connecticut the opportunity to reduce costs in one of the biggest areas of state spending, make government work better all the while helping non-violent men and women re-integrate themselves into society and build productive lives. It costs Connecticut approximately \$50,000 a year to care for each inmate. The "Second Chance" initiative is an alternative to continuing to invest huge sums to house, feed and guard non-violent offenders.\*In addition, approximately 70% of the average daily cost per inmate in 2008-2009 went to correction employee pay and benefits. (Assessment of Connecticut's Correction, Parole and Probation Systems," *Connecticut Institute for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 2011.* " Continued analysis of the best practices in other states and countries is recommended going forward, including analysis of the practices of Michigan's Prison Re-Entry program along with reform of Oregon and South Carolina. Not only will best practices bring down costs, lower recidivism, and increase public safety, it will afford non-violent ex-offenders the opportunity to turn their lives around and re-integrate into society as productive members.

The best and most effective way to give someone the second chance they need to be a productive member of society is to ensure access to job and housing opportunities upon release. There are too many non-violent ex-offenders for whom gaining employment is practically impossible because of their felony conviction. Assisting these individuals re-entering society and providing opportunities for their success requires collaboration from business organizations, the education community, and other non-profits to ensure there is a post-prison employment program providing them with vocational skills training and adult education. "Second Chance" society can be an investment that will help non-violent ex-offenders transition successfully outside jail and become income earners paying taxes and supporting their families- a win-win situation for all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Louise DiCocco, Assistant Counsel, CBIA