



February 10, 2016

Dear Appropriations Committee,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Appropriations Committee and the legislative body for hearing our testimony and our gratitude for their countless efforts in shaping Connecticut's budget. STRIDE has been under the umbrella of the Connecticut Department of Labor for 17 years. We are a proven, marketable workforce development program that enhances public safety, reduces recidivism and drastically cuts cost to taxpayers. STRIDE provides a 10-week, pre and post-release classroom instruction to parents at four Connecticut Correctional facilities/centers. The class curriculum and post-release services are collaboratively designed to assist parents in successfully reentering the workforce while resuming their parental roles. Upon release, STRIDE participants are provided with a job developer who deliver post-release supports including job search and placement, development of opportunities with employers, linkage to community supports to promote retention and educational experiences.

STRIDE (Skills, Transition, Respect, Integrity, Direction, Employment) operates within the Quinebaug Valley Community College's Administrative Services Division and the American Job Center in Hamden. The STRIDE Program serves a targeted group of incarcerated men and women that are non-custodial parents of children under the age of 25 who are now or have been recipients of any CT state assistance programs such as TFA, SAGA/LIA, HUSKY or SNAP both pre- and post-release. STRIDE facilitates its 10-week curriculum out of the following correctional facilities/centers: York Correctional Institution in Niantic, Bridgeport Correctional Center in Bridgeport, Corrigan-Radgowski Correctional Center in Uncasville and most recently we have established our program at Willard-Cybulski due to the most current legislative enactment of Governor Malloy's Second Chance Society Initiative. STRIDE is part of the Cybulski Community Reintegration Center in Enfield, working with the Reintegration Unit and the new Veterans Unit.

STRIDE is partnering with Capitol Workforce Partners (CWP) on the I-Best Second Chance Project and will be responsible for the pre-release component of this groundbreaking pilot supported under Governor Malloy's Second Chance Society Initiative most recently enacted in July 2015.

STRIDE is part the Connecticut Reentry Collaborative consisting of five roundtables across the state. The collaborative is facilitated by Andrew Clark, Director of the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) operating out of CCSU. We co-founded and chair the Windham County Reentry Council and chair the Greater Hartford Reentry Council. STRIDE has active membership in all Roundtables throughout the state. We are working diligently to identify and address common needs and gaps in services for incarcerated individuals returning to their perspective communities.

STRIDE and the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport manage and edit the *CT REENTRY VOICES* newsletter which is published quarterly.

STRIDE was awarded winner of the 2012 National Bellwether Award in the Workforce Development category at the Community College Futures Assembly in Orlando, Florida. The Bellwether Award is a prestigious award given to colleges with innovative programs.

Reentry is a legitimate community safety strategy. Case management is the cornerstone to reentry; it must be targeted, individualized and collaborative in order for it to be successful. We support and recognize the successful community reintegration of our STRIDE participants. The STRIDE Program has a significant impact on the individuals it serves. Our growth over the past 17 years has proven to the CT taxpayers and legislative stakeholders that we are a viable, sought after reentry workforce development program. STRIDE participants have an 8%\*\* recidivism rate compared to 47%\* with no reentry program in place.

The true key to STRIDE's success is our post-release component. No matter what compassionate acts are delivered within the walls, those female and male felons who walk out of the prison gates free are confronted with an imposing obstacle course of barriers. Criminal justice statistics support that the critical components of a successful transition from prison to community are **a job** and **continuity of care**. STRIDE offers consistency of contact and committed follow-up. STRIDE paves access to employers who are willing to consider ex-offenders for prospective employment and can offer them the first step in building a proven track record.

STRIDE is the bridge between incarceration and independence; without which, many of these women and men will falter and fail. This gap translates to repeat and prolonged incarceration at a great financial cost to State taxpayers, but also and more importantly, another failure that pushes this person closer to hopelessness.

Please find included some testimonials from our STRIDE participants and the employers who hire them. We would like to share with you what our participants have to say about STRIDE.

Please continue to fund the STRIDE Program to enhance public safety and keep these women and men safe, healthy, employed and productive in our state and local communities.

Respectfully Submitted,



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*\*Based on the 2011 Annual Recidivism Report from the State of Connecticut, Office of Policy & Management Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division. \*\*STRIDE recidivism rate based on all participating clients.*