

**Testimony on STRIVE**  
**Scott K. Wilderman, President/CEO Career Resources, Inc.**  
**February 10, 2016**

Good evening, my name is Scott K. Wilderman and I am the CEO of Career Resources. I am speaking tonight in support of continued funding for the STRIVE program as part of the Department of Labor budget. Before I begin I want to take this opportunity to thank the committee for this public hearing and for your commitment to the State of Connecticut. I also want you to know that I made a conscious decision not to parade dozens of clients or employers in this evening to speak about STRIVE as I have done in past. I know that time is limited and that your job is daunting, therefore I wish to be respectful to all in attendance this evening.

Over the past 6 years, the State of Connecticut invested roughly \$1.5 million into STRIVE. The return on that investment includes 450 graduates who were placed into employment and a resulting combined annualized employment income for these graduates of nearly \$7.7 million. This translates into \$1.1 million in taxes paid annually, or nearly a 400% return on investment for the State. Considering that of the 450 graduates placed into employment, 66% were former offenders, 41% were single parents, 80% were receiving some form of public assistance while 20% did not have a H.S. diploma, the outcomes here are quite remarkable.

Since over half of the population served are former offenders and STRIVE aligns nicely with the Governor's Second Chance Society Initiative, we wanted to take a deeper dive into

the impact that STRIVE has with this population. Therefore we focused on 123 former offenders from Hartford who graduated from the program over the past 42 months. What we found was a marked decrease in recidivism with only 6% being convicted of new crimes over a 24 month period. Compare that to the state declared 24 month recidivism rate of 56% and the cost savings to the state for deterring incarceration charges is roughly about \$1.8 million annually!

You may be wondering why is this program so successful? Well, what makes this program different it that it is an in-your-face, attitudinal adjustment, experiential learning program that confronts and addresses individual behaviors that have previously often prohibited workplace success. STRIVE recognizes that many people have never gained the foundational “soft skills” to succeed: Their inability to work cooperatively, handle criticism, or successfully navigate the myriad of spoken and unspoken expectations in any workplace have often meant people lose job after job, rarely understanding why -- or how -- to change.

The \$240k from the state has provided the foundational support for the STRIVE Program. We were able to leverage these funds to win a Federal SAMSHA grant in New Haven that serves former offenders with mental health and addiction issues. This Federal grant may now be in jeopardy if the STRIVE funds are eliminated from the State budget.

The bottom line is that STRIVE, while operating at a fraction of the cost, produces outstanding results when compared to other employment and training programs. STRIVE is a result based model, an accountable program that, when analyzed actually helps pay for itself.