

Testimony of YWCA Hartford Region  
IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 5237 "AN ACT CONCERNING FAIR CHANCE EMPLOYMENT"  
Before the Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees  
March 3, 2016

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Dear Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and other distinguished members of the Labor Committee:

eliminating racism  
empowering women

**ywca**

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My name is Deborah Ullman from West Hartford and I am CEO of YWCA Hartford Region. Our mission is to empower women and eliminate racism and that is why we stand in support of HB: 5237 An Act Concerning Fair Chance Employment.

Children and families suffer when people with criminal records can't work. Studies have shown that employment is the single most important factor in reducing recidivism. Many of the women and families we serve are not realizing their full potential because a parent's job application is being rejected because of a criminal record. Hiring discrimination is most likely to occur at the first point of contact, the application. For any number of entry-level jobs, ranging from warehouse workers to delivery drivers to sales clerks, employers and staffing agencies, both contain job ads and job applications that effectively shut the door on those with a criminal record. Parents of the children that we work with can't secure these entry level jobs that they need to provide for their children. The result is a continued cycle of poverty.

Currently, many Connecticut employers force individuals to disclose criminal convictions on an initial application for employment. Employers then weed out the individuals who disclose convictions. These individuals don't get the chance to demonstrate how they would add value to the organization.

Over one in three adults have criminal records. A disproportionate percentage of them are people of color. As an organization committed to the elimination of racism, we support the enactment of this act that will address this systemic racism and provides everyone with the opportunity to provide for their families.

YWCA Hartford Region supports H.B. 5237 and we hope the committee will vote favorably on it.

Thank you for your time,  
Deborah G. Ullman  
Chief Executive Officer  
YWCA Hartford Region