



**Connecticut Conference  
United Church of Christ**

125 Sherman Street  
Hartford, CT 06105-6004

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 5237:  
An Act Concerning Fair Chance Employment  
Submitted by, Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate  
Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ  
March 3, 2016**

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

I am Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate for the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, and I am writing today in support of House Bill 5237: An Act Concerning Fair Chance Employment to prevent employers from requiring certain employees or prospective employees to disclose any criminal history until the employer has made a conditional offer of employment to such employee or prospective employee.

I am writing on behalf of the 235 congregations and more than 67,500 people in our state's churches. In fact, the United Church of Christ (UCC) is the largest Protestant denomination in Connecticut. Nationally, the UCC has more than 5,700 congregations with nearly 1 million members. In 2014, the assembled delegates and ministers of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ met and voted on a Resolution which calls upon the Connecticut Conference to advocate to end mass incarceration for non-violent offenses and the implementation of restorative justice principles in all possible circumstances.

This bill would eliminate barriers to employment for individuals with a criminal record. It is the just and fair thing to do. All of us at one time or another have done things we are not proud of and made mistakes. Someone with a criminal record should not be prevented from gaining employment, but sadly this is the case. People with a criminal record are often required to check the box on employment applications indicating that they have a criminal history.

This bill will prohibit employers from asking about criminal history in the initial job application. This will give people trying to build a new life a fair and real chance for employment and save the questions about criminal history for later in the hiring process. This levels the playing field by requiring private employers to play by the same rules as the State of Connecticut and the cities of Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Norwich, and New London, which already ban asking about criminal history early in the job application process.<sup>1</sup>

One in three adults has a criminal record that creates serious barriers to finding employment. We support this effort to "ban the box" which would remove the criminal history question from job applications for private employers and postpone the background check until a job offer is made by the employer. Employees should be evaluated on the merits of their qualifications, not their criminal records. Research shows that when an employer has a chance to get to know the qualifications of an applicant, the employer would be more willing to hire that person. Nationwide, nineteen states and over one hundred cities and counties have embraced fair hiring policies, with six states extending it to private employers, including Massachusetts and Rhode Island.<sup>2</sup>

All of God's people deserve a fair chance for employment with no discrimination. For someone re-entering society, a fair chance at a job can break the cycles of poverty and crime by allowing them to support themselves and their families.<sup>3</sup> We therefore urge the Committee to support House Bill 5237 which, if adopted, would give everyone, regardless of a criminal record, a fair chance for employment. Thank you for your work and the opportunity to supply written testimony in support of House Bill 5237.

Blessings,  
Michele Mudrick (860) 796-3822 michelem@ctucc.org

<sup>1</sup> American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut

<sup>2</sup> Nelp.org

<sup>3</sup> American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut



**God is still speaking,**

860.233.5564 toll free) 866.367.2822 fax) 860.231.8111 www.ctucc.org