

Testimony of Sean Moore  
Head of Men's Mentoring  
Yale Undergraduate Prison Project

In favor: H.B. 5237 An Act Concerning Fair Chance Employment.

My name is Sean Moore and behalf of the Yale Undergraduate Prison Project, I urge you to pass Bill 5237. This proposal is a necessary step in ensuring the successful reentry of ex-offenders and the meaningful employment of those with criminal records who may face discriminatory hiring practices.

I write you with urgency and from a place of experience as someone who has 7 years of experience working with reentering populations. I also write from a personal place, as someone who has witnessed first hand through family members the difficulty of obtaining meaningful employment with a criminal record. My father was a convicted felon, and in the early years of my life he faced difficulty in finding work. Spiraling deeper and deeper into debt, and seeing no way out, he killed my mother and himself in a murder-suicide. The hopelessness and inability to gain a foothold my father experienced had an earth shattering effect on my life trajectory at the age of 8. I was placed into foster care and due to a lack of resources, found myself homeless at the age of 18 until the age of 21. I was able to find a path to self-sufficiency, relying on homeless shelters and soup kitchens. In these places I had my first encounters with ex-offenders who could not find work due to their criminal records. Many of these men were some of the most brilliant and sensitive minds and hearts I have ever encountered. I saw the hard work and determination in their quest to become self-sufficient, and the ensuing hopelessness as they were rejected from job after job when they were forced to check a box disclosing their criminal background.

When I secured an apartment, a job, and enrolled at community college, I founded a reentry program that offered resume creation and job application workshops, GED classes, guided meditation, and family reconciliation sessions. It is then that I fully began to understand the importance of gainful employment in their lives. The need to work and provide for their loved ones was paramount in healing family relationships, and the barriers to the job market that criminal record disclosure posed had a crippling ripple effect. At Yale, I mentor men in Manson Juvenile Correctional Facility, and the primary goal I hear echoed over and over is to obtain a job post incarceration. Employment is a bridge to self worth that everyone should have access to. A job is the first step in the ladder of opportunity that America prides itself on. The discrimination these men face has a detrimental effect on their entire support network, as well as those who are dependent upon them. It is my hope that the members of the Connecticut government recognize this crucial step in providing these men with access to the ladder of opportunity that I was able to use. Please pass Bill 5237 as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time.