



State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106

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Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and other distinguished members of the labor committee. My name is Subira Gordon and I am the legislative analyst for the African American Affairs Commission. The mission of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) is to improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut. The AAAC is a steering committee member of the CT Fair chance coalition.

I am writing to provide testimony in support of HB 5237 AAC Fair Chance Employment.

Research shows that African Americans have a disproportionate impact with the police which has negative long term effects on African American communities across the nation and especially in Connecticut which is the most segregated state. In my capacity as a legislative aide and then now as a legislative analyst I have heard many heart breaking stories from individuals who have made mistakes in their lives which has resulted in a criminal record and are being penalized for that mistake decades after the fact. I would like to thank the labor committee for raising this bill and giving it a public hearing as this I believe is the most important piece of legislation this year. While the state continues to grapple with financial instability there are communities of color who are left out of the job market and have no access to gainful employment which will help them and their families no longer be a burden on the ever shrinking safety net.

A criminal record should exist for the police to be aware of your criminal history not as a barrier to employment. This bill does two things, one removing the criminal record question from application and additionally limits the amount of time that employers can use that record as a disqualifier for employment, both of which are instrumental in helping individuals get access to employment. Many people who have records and are able to make it through the door and even when they do get an interview are then turned down for the job based on the fact that they had a criminal history.

Last year the legislature passed a second chance society bill that addresses some of the wrongs that have existed in the criminal justice system that created criminals out of individuals who are now seen today as having a substance abuse problem. Changing many offences to misdemeanors is helpful however even with a misdemeanor many people are still not able to access employment.

As a society we have to have a conversation about how long does a person have to be penalized for a crime, and after serving time in prison and being on probation shouldn't that person have paid their debt to society?

I want to thank you for having this hearing in a city that has already taken the initiative to make this a municipal policy.

Again thank you for giving this important piece of legislation a public hearing

Thank you

Subira Gordon
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