



State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106

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Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and other distinguished members of the judiciary 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 here to provide comment on S.B. No. 430 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYMENT FOLLOWING AN ARREST, CRIMINAL CHARGE OR CONVICTION AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION GUIDANCE and S.B. No. 454 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING AUTOMATIC ERASURE OF CRIMINAL RECORDS.

SB 430 requires employers to follow the federal EEOC guidelines with regards to criminal records. The AAAC fully supports any legislation aimed at helping individuals with criminal records access employment opportunities. As has been proven by many studies African Americans are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. This then leads to less employment in African American communities as well as higher recidivism rates due to the fact that many people with a criminal records are unable to get jobs even if their record is decades old and has no relation to the job they are applying for.

I do want to point the committee to HB 5237 AAC Fair Chance Employment which will eventually come up for a vote in the Judiciary Committee which is a stronger bill and will help those with a criminal record in a more substantial way. This bill requires a person to receive a conditional offer of employment before submitting to a criminal background check and then places a time limit on how long a record should be counted against an employee. This bill passed on consent out of the labor committee. As a state that has made a commitment to a second chance society this bill will help many people who were previously incarcerated for low level drug offences as well as those who made mistakes at some point in their life access employment which will help to change the trajectory of their lives. But I do want to be clear that no employer is required to hire any person if they do not think that person is qualified for the job.

The AAAC thinks that both 5237 and 430 are important pieces of legislation that could work well together however we do hope that currently employers are following the federal law and EEOC guidelines.

We fully support SB 454 as it makes it clear that if an individual is not charged with a crime or if there is a wrongful arrest, there should be no record of the arrest.

Thank you for your time today.