



March 22, 2016

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, Senator Kissel, and Representative Reblimbas.

RE: Bill No. 467

Terror and fear are not something I have personally experienced in the workplace. However, every day I work with many people who have. They are survivors of a recent, unprecedented, globally-infamous instance of extreme workplace violence which occurred in our home state of Connecticut. As an employee of that company, and its current Director of Human Resources, it is my duty to speak not only on behalf of those survivors who continue to struggle daily with the resulting emotional scars, but also on behalf of the eight souls who were slaughtered senselessly on that tragic day, and the shattered families they left behind. The details of this event were widely publicized in the media at the time, and remain well documented.

On August 3, 2010, an employee of Hartford Distributors, Inc. (HDI) located in Manchester, Connecticut, opened fire without warning, killing eight employees and injuring two others. While the shooter systematically made his way through the building, fellow employees cowered in fear, in closets and under desks. Several employees locked themselves in offices, knowing that the shooter was just outside the door. Many of those whose lives were spared, witnessed their co-workers running in fear for their lives, only to be ruthlessly cut down by the gunman – and in many cases, killed on the spot. The situation quickly unraveled into a state of hellish chaos – a bloodbath of fear and terror, as it has been described to me. The perpetually burdened survivors recount the details of that day as though they had occurred yesterday.

It goes without saying that all employees should reasonably expect to feel safe in the environment in which they work. While employers cannot remove all possibility of workplace violence, it is incumbent upon employers to take every reasonable step to mitigate risks of events like the one which occurred at HDI on August 3, 2010, by implementing safety programs that include fair hiring practices. To “ban the conviction box” on employment applications and thus, limit the time period that an employer may utilize criminal records would severely restrict employers’ ability to make judicious hiring decisions. A system which permits an applicant to not disclose convictions prior to a conditional offer of employment is patently irresponsible.

HARTFORD DISTRIBUTORS, INC.

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A "Fair Chance of Employment" starts with educating employers on non-discriminatory hiring practices. Clearly, that includes not condemning those with prior criminal history. As a Human Resources professional, I advocate for "second chances" for those who may have had prior convictions, and who, after paying their dues to society, should be given the opportunity to prove themselves like anyone else. In normal hiring protocol, the interview process allows for meaningful discussion between the job candidate and the interviewer to discuss any prior convictions. Any consideration given to prior convictions forms only one of several inputs to the hiring-decision process, which also weighs the candidate's qualifications, experience, and other factors.

The spirit of Bill No. 467 is highly restrictive to employers and could result in many "unsafe" hirings across our state. While many of us cannot relate to the incident that had taken place at HDI, we must all remember the lives that are affected by this tragedy.

On behalf of the management of Hartford Distributors, Inc., we respectfully request that you do not pass this Bill. We thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Marla S. D'Amelia'.

Marla S. D'Amelia SPHR, SHRM-SCP
Director of Human Resources

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