

**HB 6219, AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY REENTRY BY PERSONS WHO WERE INCARCERATED**  
**February 8, 2017**

Dear Representative McGee, and members of the Committee on LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES  
Thanks very much for your introduction of HB 6219, *AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY REENTRY BY PERSONS WHO WERE INCARCERATED*

*I write in favor of HB6219*

The prison system in Connecticut is a revolving door through which thousands pass every year. Unfortunately, many of those entering our prisons are formerly-incarcerated individuals returning after failing to make it on the outside. In Connecticut, over half of released prisoners return within three years of their release, thereby costing taxpayers millions of dollars.

The war on crime has been waged at a huge financial cost. It has also exacted a heavy human toll, particularly in our inner cities and on minorities. Connecticut's annual cost per prison bed is \$51,000, the third highest in the country

Many difficulties face the formerly-incarcerated upon their release - the primary obstacle is finding a job. Research shows that as many as 60% of ex-offenders do not hold legitimate employment one year after their release from prison. Statistics compiled by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts in Washington, D.C. indicate that employment is the critical factor in whether released inmates succeed with re-entry. release.

The Malta Justice Initiative, which I represent, has been working in prison ministry since 1990. In September 2015, we published "***The Justice Imperative: How Hyper-Incarceration Has Hijacked the American Dream***", a book which preceded Governor Malloy's Second Chance Initiative and with which many of you are familiar. *The Justice Imperative* is well researched in citing Connecticut Criminal Justice Policy, Comparative Analysis of Crime Rate and recommendations to reduce recidivism and save millions.

Malta Justice Initiative has just published a never been done before survey of CT businesses, "***Practices and Attitudes Regarding the Hiring of Formerly-Incarcerated Persons-and-Recommendations for Driving Better Outcomes***". Conducted by Nielsen/Harris Poll in cooperation with the Tow Foundation, CBIA and other partners, this survey provides opportunities for changing outcomes.

Prior research strongly indicates that if an ex-offender can find and hold onto a job within the first year of release, he or she will not recidivate. It has been reported that as many as 60% of ex-offenders do not hold legitimate employment one year after their release from prison. However, 93% of those who found jobs throughout their supervised release period did not return to prison. For more information on MJJ, the book and the full report and executive summary of the survey, please visit our website:

[www.maltajusticeinitiative.org](http://www.maltajusticeinitiative.org)

If we, as a society, are serious about providing meaningful second chances, reducing recidivism, and re-integrating the formerly incarcerated, the key to driving such outcomes lies in enhancing the job prospects of ex-offenders. The survey suggests several specific reforms or initiatives.

Connecticut is seen nationally as a leader in providing the smart-on-crime policies that help all our citizens to succeed in the workforce. I believe that the results of our survey would support your

proposed legislation. Lawmakers must fully understand the challenges facing Connecticut's employers and acknowledge the role they play in removing barriers and accelerating growth.

Employers are looking for legislators to demonstrate a sincere desire to make our state and its businesses more economically competitive. Encourage employers through incentives to provide fair chance employment for those Connecticut citizens with a criminal history. Convert the wards of the Governor to tax-paying citizens.

Respectfully,  
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