

Testimony by Reverend Gordon S. Bates regarding HB 6219: An Act Concerning Community Reentry by Persons who were Incarcerated: “by improving the rate of successful community reentry released from correctional facilities through the provision of enhanced employment opportunities”.

To the members of the Joint Committee on Labor and Public Employees:

Thank you for this opportunity to register my support of HB 6219, introduced by Representative Brandon McGee of the 5th District and Representative Geraldo Reyes of the 75th District.

From 1980 to 1997, I served as the Executive Director of the Connecticut Prison Association (now called Community Partners in Action). The acronym of both is CPA. For all those years, and continuing on into this century, the agency had job training and placement program for ex-offenders in the community, some on probation or parole and some who had completed their sentences. Invariably, the need for reentry assistance was obvious and greatly desired. With few exceptions, the men and women in the program realized that finding a job for which they qualified was an absolute must if they were to have any success in the free world and avoid the temptations to return to crime to sustain themselves and their families.

I read many studies of the problems faced by offenders after reentry, beyond the challenges of paying for housing, transportation, health care and food, such as the challenges of reintegrating with their spouses and children and maintain their own self-respect and dignity as members of the community. Again, with few exceptions, those studies demonstrated the importance of having ongoing counseling and moral support in the search for a viable job.

I urge the committee to view this bill favorably.

Thank you for your attention. Let me know if I can be of any further assistance to you.

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