



TESTIMONY OF
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CONNECTICUT BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 16, 2017
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Co-Chairs Gomes, Porter and Minor, Vice Chairs MacLachlin, Osten, Paolillo, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Andrea Comer and I am the Executive Director for the Connecticut Business and Industry Association's Education & Workforce Partnership. CBIA represents roughly 10,000 member businesses that employ about 700,000 women and men in the state. Our membership consists of firms of all sizes and types, the vast majority of which are small businesses employing fewer than 50 people. The Education & Workforce Partnership supports the development of the state's talent pipeline through public-private collaboration.

I'm here today on behalf of CBIA to speak in support of the intent of **HB 6219, AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY REENTRY BY PERSONS WHO WERE INCARCERATED.**

Our members frequently cite the challenges in finding skilled workers, and while our efforts to address that have been successful, we could always do more. To that end, we support efforts that remove those barriers facing employers as well as those who are returning to our communities, and with the proper training can be productive contributors to growing our state's economy.

Last month, the Malta Initiative released the results of its Connecticut Employer Survey, which revealed that of the more than 300 businesses surveyed, 95% were willing to give formerly incarcerated individuals a second chance, and 73% indicated a strong willingness to hire a person with a criminal record if tax credits were given. Moreover, the provision of tax credits aligns with federal tax credits offered through legislation successfully introduced by Congressman John Larson. The report also revealed that 77% of the survey respondents support legislation to provide employers who hire people with a criminal record with civil and criminal protection. The

fear of risk and liability is among the strongest factors in hiring former offenders, and we hope this legislation will consider incorporating language to address it.

CBIA has been a strong advocate of criminal justice reform through such efforts as Second Chance, and our contribution to the production of the Malta Initiative report. In addition, last month we hosted a workforce development conference featuring a panel on hiring ex-offenders that included Commissioner Semple and two formerly incarcerated and currently gainfully employed individuals. We know that this is not only the right thing to do morally, but it is the right thing to do for our state's economic health.

Finally, while we support the concept of the bill there is a reality that must be considered: Connecticut is once again in a budget crisis. As such, the tax incentive component of this bill should be carefully examined to ensure it does not generate a fiscal burden that the state cannot afford to shoulder right now.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.