

SUPPORT FOR H.B. No. 6219

& to save CT \$100+ million by *helping everyone*

By William Eastwood

To protect the public state officials draft long lists of restrictions on offenders, only to learn that those restrictions are backfiring, because in preventing reintegration they put society at risk.¹ Those offenders that cannot cope with almost constant incapacitation fall back off course and often into crime or prison. In this way victims, communities and offenders pay the price of ineffective government.

Crime is the act of hurting others. As long as state agencies insist on hurting offenders there will be no justice or success for anyone. H.B. 6219 is a good bill because it helps where others harm.

This bill seeks to reduce the harm done by the state's excessive sanctions and incapacitation of those on parole as a result of its war on crime. One state agency is functioning in opposition to another like two armies fighting each other. If you stop funding the two armies the expensive war will end.

With 6219 you are climbing the right tree but in the wrong jungle. Crimes are not against the state, and the state has no business funding and sponsoring a war that is not theirs. Crimes in general are an offense against **victims and communities**, and by leaving the issue of sanctions in their hands by introducing a new policy of Restorative Justice (RJ) the problem of reintegration and the high cost of imprisonment will be

¹ **Obama says** "almost one in three adults have some form of criminal record," and as "a country of equal treatment and second chances," we need "a better program to reintegrate them into society.

"The obstacles to this population finding gainful employment, obtaining public benefits, pursuing higher education, and reintegrating into the workforce are staggering. **Needlessly harsh collateral consequences** that make it difficult for the formerly incarcerated to get a fair chance....deprives businesses of talented workers, and it deprives communities in desperate need of more role models who are gainfully employed....**this is a public safety issue.**

"Not every solution to these issues can or should be mandated by the federal government... That is why I've been so committed to finding ways to encourage continued **state and local government ingenuity** and to highlight those state reforms that should be **models** for others to follow."

— Excerpts taken from "The President's Role in Advancing Criminal Justice Reform." Commentary by Barack Obama. Jan 5, 2017.

solved. Victims and communities would get the retribution they are being denied now yet deserve, and communities all across CT will be healed and grow stronger and more prosperous. And hundreds of millions will be freed up to expedite the statewide transformation of CT.

Victim and community input within a RJ program will produce far different results. Sanctions will be more appropriate to community needs and reintegration, and will not destroy the social ties and professional opportunities that lead to a need for 6219 in the first place. Community takes care of its own, whereas the state just prosecutes to the full extent of the law and applies excessive stipulations and controls that do not fit the risks, or as blanket conditions that do not apply in individual cases, or even if the risks are low, i.e. 1.7 % for sex offenders. Feel-good, get tough on crime legislation ultimately results in the kind of problems H.B. 6219 is trying to address with very expensive Band-Aids.

All of this nonsense is a huge debauchery and waste of taxpayer's money.

I am in possession of a report from a state that is implementing restorative justice. It says Illinois can lower its crime rate, incarceration rate and improve public safety with *an estimated savings of \$110 million.*

If the state insists on continuing down a path the rest of the world is diverting from then the only real solution to this problem would be for the state to employ the people it previously incarcerated, because once this state is done with an individual it incarcerates, very few employers want to employ them.

I support Bill No. 6219 as long as it does not discriminate against any class of offender reentering society (including offenders of sexual offenses).

NOTES, MY ACCOUNT AND REQUEST

I was not convicted of sex assault or a contact crime, but allegedly made a threat while intoxicated, and because the trial court assumed my intent was sexual I was classified as a Sex Offender (SO). In 2009 I was released after serving an effective nine year sentence, but received an immediate special parole violation and served an additional six years for having written a book on human potential in prison. I was again released in 2015.

Criminals are often thought to be bad apples, yet everyone is capable of both good and bad, and all of us are highly influenced by the views others hold of us and what labels or stigmas imply. The stigma that goes with my conviction and the public registry requirement is another problem for offenders, and too many problems are what lead to offenses. It does not make society safer that no one will give me a job or housing, and that I live in a constant state of fear. Experts all agree because the empirical evidence supporting this fact is well established. Punishment, labels and excessive controls and attempts to fix "us" speaks to, reinforces and grows the very problem it attempts to fix. *Read my book* rather than making it illegal for me to publish it.

After years of incarceration a person's ability to function on the outside atrophies. I had lived in Madison, yet I was released into the city of Hartford, where despite my positive attitude and determination to succeed in all ways, even crossing the street and riding a bus was a big challenge for me. The January Center I was in beforehand was not at all helpful with exception

to them allowing me to write my book and articles on personal and social transformation. The Chrysalis program, however, helped except for one administrator who was tormenting me and threatening re-incarceration for anything and everything, i.e. for keeping my small prison TV in storage.

The CT DOC sponsored Chrysalis program that helps people who were previously incarcerated to focus on gaining employment by providing job search services, food, housing, clothing, work supplies, etc., enabled many prior inmates I knew to get jobs and apartments. Similar to 6219 in its good intent, this program was my first experience with kindness since 2000, and I believe that is why the program is very successful.

Prior to my incarceration I had been a successful siding contractor of hundreds of luxury homes, and I had educated adults online as an author of personal transformation publications. Because of restrictions I could not return to Madison or Guilford to resume being a contractor, or have a laptop computer and work online to help people (My case has nothing to do with my prior legitimate online work).

There are other problems with gaining employment: In Hartford I could not get a full time job because *I had to report to my PO and an SO program midday Tuesdays and Wednesdays. This is done because it is a convenience for state employees.* Alstaff staffing agency and others told me that was an insane and impossible obstacle to gaining full time employment. Additionally I must tell all potential employees what my charges are, pass background checks, and cannot work in public domain jobs such as landscaping, residential construction, in stores or making deliveries. The fact that I cannot show employment on my resume for the previous fifteen years during which time I was incarcerated doesn't help either.

While I was in the Chrysalis program I still struggled to find employment, another reason for 6219. Because of excessive stipulations and conditions of my Special Parole it took me several months to get a job as a driver's helper collecting trash. Then I was moved to the Eddy Center in Middletown and was forced to lose the job as a result. That was an unnecessary loss of a very difficult to obtain job and a big setback for me and my family. From there I was not allowed to go to Hartford for a dishwashing job, and was locked down all the time, and for the most part still am. The state is once again housing me in a highly restricted and unhealthy environment while forcing taxpayer's to foot the bill.

With eight more years of Special Parole I believe that no matter how hard I try to satisfy my stipulations and conditions that I will be re-incarcerated as I was in 2009 for my social contribution. I believe my PO violated me and BOP held me for an additional six years not because I used my prison time constructively to write a book to help humanity, but because of the stigma of the charges resulting from being demonized in a witch hunt.

In all the political and public blame games , those in opposition to 6219 have lost touch with the fact that offenders are the citizens of this state that most need help. They are not bad people, they are citizens that have made mistakes. This bill is the right tree, and RJ is the right jungle.

I am not the problem; I am part of the solution. I have a restorative justice implementation plan for the state. I invite anyone that wants to save the state hundreds of millions of dollars with restorative justice to sit down with me and Cindy Prizio. I challenge any state official to look at what I have and to see if their policies are in fact superior. If I am such a sub-human element of society then it should be easy to prove, if you are not too far above the label the state has put on me (that has nothing to do with who I really am) to stoop down to my level. Please help people.

Written for presentation at public hearing on 2/16/17, Legislative bldg., 300 Capitol Ave., Hartford CT.
Requesting meeting with legislator