

**Written Testimony Supporting Proposed House Bill No. 6219**  
**“An Act Concerning Community Reentry By Persons Who Were Incarcerated”**

Gus Marks-Hamilton  
The University of Connecticut School of Social Work

Good afternoon Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter and the other members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee.

My name is Gus Marks-Hamilton. I am a graduate student in my final semester at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work where my attention over the past two years has been on criminal justice policy and reform in our state. I am grateful for this opportunity to testify before you today in support of the Proposed House Bill No. 6219, “An Act Concerning Community Reentry By Persons Who Were Incarcerated.”

This bill is meant to address an issue of critical importance for the cities and communities in our state that does not only concern our returning citizens, but the economic stability, productivity and prosperity of our state as a whole. I have personally witnessed and experienced the difficulties faced by the formerly incarcerated as they transition out of correctional facilities, whether through “work release programs” in halfway houses, or directly back into their communities. These men and women possess a powerful drive and eagerness to rebuild their lives. Finding a job is a top priority for them because employment is more than just a livelihood; it provides structure, a sense of identity and social support. It is a means of providing independence and self-sufficiency for themselves and their families. They know it. But the motivation to find gainful employment is often challenged by the stigma of having a criminal record, as well as the risk-averse nature of employers wary of hiring a person who was once incarcerated.

All individuals should have the opportunity to strive to meet their full potential and lead productive lives as taxpaying and law abiding citizens. As a state and as a society, we must ensure that formerly incarcerated individuals are not passed over for employment because of a past for which they have paid their debts. Studies have shown that returning citizens who find employment soon after they are released are less likely to be rearrested or return to prison during the period when they are at the greatest risk for reoffending. Without opportunities to reintegrate into the community, the risk of recidivism greatly increases.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Federal Bonding Program provides state workforce agencies with a package of promotional bonds to provide an incentive to employers to hire at-risk job seekers, including the formerly incarcerated. This program has proven to be extremely successful, with only 1% of the bonds ever issued resulting in a claim. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is an incentive program at the federal level that allows employers to save money on their federal income taxes by hiring individuals who have been convicted of a felony. Employers can apply for and receive federal tax credits for each new hire. These programs have assisted formerly incarcerated men and women become productive citizens, and have saved taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration.

To sustain the social and economic well-being of Connecticut, the General Assembly should take steps to ensure that formerly incarcerated individuals have the opportunities and resources to find employment, and that employers be given credit for their efforts to foster and build the workforce in our state.

I urge this committee’s favorable action on this bill and thank you for your time and consideration.

Gus Marks-Hamilton  
[gus.marks.hamilton@gmail.com](mailto:gus.marks.hamilton@gmail.com)