



Connecticut Department of Labor

Scott D. Jackson, Commissioner

**Public Hearing Testimony of  
Scott Jackson, Commissioner  
Department of Labor  
Labor and Public Employees Committee  
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Good Afternoon Senator Gomes, Senator Miner, Representative Porter, Representative Bocchino and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with written testimony regarding **House Bill No. 6219, An Act Concerning Community Re-Entry by Persons Who Were Incarcerated**. My name is Scott Jackson and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Labor. I am also a Connecticut resident who believes in second chances and has seen those second chances bear fruit.

While the details of this legislation are yet to be finalized, I applaud Representative McGee for his courage and foresight in submitting this proposal. Labor markets are dynamic and elastic. Employer behavior at the peak of the Great Recession is decidedly different from employer behavior as we approach full—but not inflationary—employment levels. As employers across sectors find themselves in stiffer competition for employees in 2017 than any time in the last decade, they are actively seeking to tap new talent wells. Our returning citizens are an opportunity. There is no greater restorative balm for a returning citizen than economic security, and there is no greater societal benefit than a return to civic and social productivity.

As you may know, working with our friends at the Tow Foundation, the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, and my former OPM colleague Undersecretary Mike Lawlor, the Malta Justice Initiative completed in December a significant data-driven survey of employers and their views on the employment of returning citizens. The results are eye-opening. 75% of respondents showed willingness to hire returning citizens for positions they had difficulty filling. When that critical piece of information is filtered into other questions indicating, for example, broad support for tax incentives for the recruiting and hiring of returning citizens, we know that there is fertile ground here in the State of Connecticut for those who have done themselves and our communities harm to overcome, to persevere, and to thrive. Where they once broke the community trust, they can now build it.

My friends, sometimes we talk, sometimes we think, and sometimes we put our shoulders to the wheel; we churn the earth and chop the wood and forge the metal to make a difference. I, and the Connecticut Department of Labor stand ready to lay that shoulder, to hone the blade of that axe, and to wield the forging hammer in support of this initiative.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony today.