

To whom it may concern:

I am a citizen volunteer with The Malta Justice Initiative (MJl) and a former Director of Community services with The Connecticut Department of Correction. It is clear from my experience that finding gainful employment for offenders returning to the community has always been a serious challenge whose outcome determines failure or success not only for offenders but their families. It is in this spirit that I support H.B. 6219.

Current levels of offender employment are not encouraging. A recent survey by Malta Justice Initiative regarding Connecticut employer attitudes toward hiring ex-offenders states that as many as 60% of ex offenders do not hold a legitimate job one year after release. Prior research suggests that during the first year following release, steady employment is the most important factor in preventing reincarceration.

Despite obstacles, the MJl survey found that Connecticut employers are clearly interested in helping to solve this problem. Ninety five percent of employer respondents agree that hiring ex-offenders contributes to their becoming productive citizens. Most are willing to hire ex-offenders.

They—and ex-offenders - need your help, however. Support for training is needed for jobs the employer needs filling. Immunity is needed to protect employers who hire ex-offenders. Tax credits and other incentives are also important.

It is important to note, as many are aware, that America has the highest incarceration rate in the world. It is several times the rate of any other western democracy, serves no public good, makes us no safer and represents an expense we cannot justify. It is unnecessary.

“Rightsizing” our prisons and substituting necessary community services – and employment - is a more effective crime reducing approach and it provides the savings to support employer incentives to hire ex-offenders.

H.B. 6219 admirably reflects the spirit of increasing gainful ex-offender employment and I support it.

Yours truly,

Edward B. Quinlan