

From: Scott Schwartz  
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CT Special Committee on Sex Offenders  
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**Statement for public hearing to the Labor Committee – 2/16/17**

I support Bill No.6219 as long as it does not discriminate against any class of offender reentering society (including registered citizens – “sex offenders”).

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A recent study of the Kia Marana Sex Offender Programme in New Zealand, reviewed the relapse prevention plans of 39 sexual recidivists and 49 non-recidivists. They found that factors such as adequate accommodations, adequate employment and secondary support systems separated recidivists from non-recidivists. This suggests the importance of transition to the community and addressing not just sex offender specific issues but more general resettlement issues such as employment, accommodations and support systems.

The current system prevents or severely curtails the ability of sex offenders to obtain adequate accommodations, employment and support systems, to the detriment of community safety and recidivism risk. Given the actual recidivism rates of sex offenders being considerably below those of other offender categories in study after study, is the extreme burden placed on them really justified? I don't believe so. In England, their Registry is police only, not publicly available, and it provides for no difference in recidivism rates compared to the US. If public

stigma, shaming and isolation is created by the government's imposed system, then I would argue that the government should provide a network to counter those harms, to assist with integration back into society successfully through employment, housing, and support system assistance, if best practices are to be applied.

While I would argue that the Registry is an ineffective at best and detrimental at worst means of providing for public safety, and should be eliminated, there are reasonable, responsible ways to lessen its detrimental effects. Since the registry creates a public stigma, which makes liveable employment difficult, if not impossible to find, the State can offer Employer incentives for hiring. These do not need to be high cost, as one large disincentive for hiring is the perceived risk of lawsuits, should a registered person be hired and commit a new offense related to their job, a Connecticut law exempting employers from liability for registered offender employee's actions would eliminate that fear or risk. Adding tax incentives, covering a portion of a registered citizens pay for the first year after hire, while entailing a cost for the state, would still be more cost effective than having to cover the costs of re-incarceration (\$50,262 in 2012) for new sex offenses, or non-sex offenses committed in order to provide for themselves and/or their families without being able to obtain gainful employment.

Similar concerns affect registered citizens' ability to find housing. Landlords are loath to rent to persons on the registry because of liability concerns and marketing concerns. The liability issues can again be resolved easily by passing a law exempting landlords from liability for having rented to a registered ex-offender. The marketing concerns are based on the stigma associated with having the address on the public registry. This can be resolved easily, and at no cost to the State by making the Registry Law Enforcement Only, rather than public. As studies comparing Great Britain's recidivism rates (Law Enforcement Only Registry) with the U.S.

recidivism rates (Public Registry), have shown that there is no difference in recidivism, and therefore no increased risk to the public by switching to a Law Enforcement Only Registry; making that change would be a wise and cost effective means of helping to make housing more readily available to Registered Citizens. The State passing a law barring local municipalities from imposing housing and public area access restrictions would also eliminate a large burden in trying to find housing, as these are often crafted to force Registered citizens to move out of entire communities or into pockets of the communities where recidivism risk may be higher due to criminal elements and substance abuse factors.

Support systems are more complicated, as they are often broken by the very system put in place to “manage” sex offenders. The cookie cutter parole and probation conditions for Sex Offenders, often prevent contact with and support from Family and Friends. Conditions should be related directly to the offense committed, not generalized. A major burden is the no contact with minors clause, which is standardly applied regardless whether the offense involved a minor or not. This can prevent a person from having contact with parents, siblings, friends, spiritual practices and education and recreational activities. These have all been shown to be vital factors in lowering recidivism. The internet restrictions are another major problem for Ex-offenders. Finding employment often requires internet access, email and accounts, including Social Media. Employers will require online applications, as well as document uploads. Communication is normally through email in this day and age. Barring access to such a fundamental part of our society and communication methods essentially marginalizes the ex-offender and makes it impossible to obtain gainful employment, or to perform the duties of a position, should one be obtained. The Registered Citizen is set up for failure. Add treatment program restrictions imposed by The Connection, Inc., including having to wait for their approval on any potential position before being able to accept employment, virtually assures that even the most menial

entry level positions will not be available. Standard Parole and probation conditions need to be replaced with offense specific conditions that accurately apply to the risk factors present. This is better for the offender, but it is also better protection for society.

Any method to assist with employment, housing and maintaining family units and external support systems is in the best interests of society, as it reduces recidivism and allows Registered Citizens to become full and productive citizens again, as opposed to drains or risks to society.

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