



## Legislative Testimony

765 Asylum Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06105  
860.523.9146 (T)  
[www.acluct.org](http://www.acluct.org)  
[info@acluct.org](mailto:info@acluct.org)

### **Written Testimony Supporting Proposed House Bill 5764, An Act Concerning the Licensing of Barbers and Hairdressers**

Senator Steinberg, Senator Gerratana, Representative Somers, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is David McGuire, and I am the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am here to testify in support of Proposed House Bill 5764, which would remove criminal history restrictions on licensure for barbers and hairdressers. As an organization committed to equity and justice, the ACLU-CT strongly supports this measure, which would help to mitigate the negative effects of a flawed criminal justice system and provide a pathway forward for people who have made mistakes.

There is no evidence that a ban on barber or hairdresser licensure for people with criminal records improves public health. There is evidence that removing barriers to employment for people with criminal convictions improves the wellbeing and strength of families and communities. As the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has noted, “unemployment is associated with a variety of negative health effects,” while employment can create the “income, benefits, and stability necessary for good health.” While licensure does not guarantee employment, it is an important entry point toward securing a steady, legal income as a barber or hairdresser.

For someone reentering society, a fair chance at a job can also break the cycles of poverty and crime by allowing them to support themselves and their loved ones. Studies show that making it easier for people with criminal records to find adequate employment significantly decreases the likelihood that they will return to our criminal justice system. In addition, we know that the majority of people entering the criminal justice system in Connecticut have children. As a result, discriminatory job licensure bans do not just harm people who have made mistakes—they harm innocent children and families. Particularly in this difficult economic climate, the Connecticut General Assembly should do all that it can to help people with criminal records and their families to succeed as law-abiding, taxpaying citizens.

For the past two years, Connecticut has strived to create a modern, national model for criminal justice, rightfully earning public and legislative support and praise. This bill offers another chance to do just that, as it offers more people in our state a true second chance. Because racial minorities are nearly three times more likely to have a criminal record than their white peers, discriminatory licensure practices based on criminal record also disproportionately harm African Americans and Latinos. House Bill 5764 is therefore a modest step toward remediating the long-term consequences of Connecticut’s racially unbalanced criminal justice system.

I urge you to support Proposed House Bill 5764.