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TO: Co-chair Julie Kushner
Co-chair Robyn A. Porter
Ranking Member Craig Miner
Ranking Member Joe Portella
Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee

RE: Support for HB 6921 AN ACT CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION BASED ON A PERSON'S CRIMINAL HISTORY.

For most of the past six years, I have been volunteering as a tutor with the Emerge CT prisoner reentry program. During that time, I have worked closely with numerous individuals recently released from prison or jail. Most of them arrive at Emerge CT lacking the job skills and experience needed for stable, productive employment. Those are the issues Emerge CT addresses, generally over the course of a few months. The Emerge CT two year recidivism rate is 14%.

Housing is one of the major impediments the members of our crew face. Often they are stuck in half-way houses because they cannot find living space because of their records. This means their days start before 4 AM so they can catch the buses to get them to Emerge CT by 7:30 AM – the start of the program day. The return home is equally tedious.

Here's how it too often plays out. H----, the person I'm presently tutoring, is hard working, conscientious and intelligent. In the three weeks we've been working together (two hours on Thursdays and Fridays), he has made excellent progress. We started the review of fractions last Thursday, work to be consolidated Friday. Except for no known reason, the half-way house locked everybody in on Friday. With luck, spending this coming Thursday and Friday on review, we'll get back on track. If H---- had been able to find independent housing, we'd be that much further along. And this is a minor example of the challenges with the present discriminatory system.

H----, as the numerous other people I have worked with, just wants a chance to get on with his life. The existing obstacles individuals encounter when they have done their time make success less likely. The result is everyone suffers.

Thank you for moving this bill forward.

Sincerely,

Ralph Jones