February 14th 2019

The Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
Testimony in Support of HB 6883, An Act Concerning A “Corrections to College” Pipeline for Youthful Offender.  

Good morning to the members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Dr. David Lee Asbery. I am the president of the Human Rights and Relations Commission, a Democratic Town Committee Member in Hamden CT as well as the President of Fixing Fathers Inc., which is a 501 (C) 3 not-for profit organization based out of Hamden Connecticut. On behalf of Fixing Fathers, Inc., I support this bill (HB 6883) that will assist youth offenders by creating a pipeline to college.

The days of doing menial work in prison are over. While incarcerated, the possibility of obtaining a college degree could be the springboard to change lives for the better. Yes, youth offenders are in need of soft working skills, yes youth offenders (in some cases) are in need of mentors and fatherhood skills. But one of the most important things that youth offenders can do while incarcerated is go to school and leave the corrections facility with a associates or a bachelor’s degree in hand. This I believe will open the doors to further opportunities to employment. This will show and convince employers that a drastic change has occurred.

According to a 2013 research study done by the RAND Corporation, inmates who participate in higher education while incarcerated are 43 percent less likely to return to prisons than those who do not participate. It is unfortunate that some of our youth end up in the criminal justice system. It is also unfortunate that these kids are, in Connecticut and in most other states, disproportionately children of color. This means that to some degree, family along with the public school system and the government has failed them. Let’s use this time to begin a process of teaching and healing so that our youth’s reentry into society is successful.

In closing, it is our duty to provide youth offenders with options, sound options that provide brighter futures not only for the individual who is being released from prison, but also for the next generation of kids to come. We want to see youth offenders telling their new success stories of reentry to their kids. This will help break the cycle of incarceration within the family unit.

Thank you for your consideration to give HB 6883, An Act Concerning a Corrections to College Pipeline for Youthful Offender a favorable report along with my full support.