



Testimony of Uzoma Orchingwa
CEO of Ameelio
Before the Committee on Transportation
Hartford, Connecticut
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Chairs Haskell and Lemar, Ranking Members Somers and Carney, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Uzoma Orchingwa, I live in New Haven, and I am the founder and CEO of Ameelio – a nonprofit technology company that uses software to build a more rehabilitative corrections system and reduce recidivism. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **Senate Bill 334, An Act Establishing a Program to Make Preparing For and Taking the Commercial Learner Permit Knowledge Test Available for Incarcerated Persons.**

I was born in Chicago, IL, but I spent my early childhood in Nigeria before moving to Connecticut with my family at eight years old. We first lived in Hartford, and ultimately settled in West Hartford.

My commitment to criminal justice reform stems from my early childhood experiences. Soon after moving to West Hartford, I met many of my life-long friends.

Tragically, but not surprisingly, the majority of my friends ended up incarcerated. Data tells us that African American boys have a 1 in 4 chance of being incarcerated. Accordingly, I had a far greater chance of ending up at New Haven Correctional, than I did at Yale where I'm graduating with a law and business degree.

Poverty and limited opportunities is the main driver of incarceration and recidivism. The poorer and less educated are the more likely you are to end up in prison.

Senate Bill No. 334 is a transformative legislation, because it provides a solution to the very core of the problem—Connecticut jobs and opportunities for those who need it most.

This bill understands that providing second chances is not only the moral thing but also the practical thing. Given that 95% of prisoners will return to society, it is vital we provide them the training and job opportunities that will prevent them from ever going back to prison.

Ameelio is a Connecticut-grown nonprofit based out of New Haven, CT. We were founded with a simple mission, to build technology that improves prisons, saves families money, and reduces recidivism. To date, we have contracts with 4 state prison systems, providing free video calls, emessaging, voice calls, education and job training. Our work has been featured in the New York Times, Bloomberg, Fobes and other outlets.



We've learned that the main barrier to successful reintegration after release isn't willingness, it is poverty and lack of opportunity. Formerly incarcerated people need stable jobs for the same reasons as everyone else: to support themselves and their loved ones, pursue life goals, and strengthen their communities. However, they are often unable to find work.

So we decided to build an all-in-one upskilling platform for underserved populations, providing them low cost jobs certification and case management.

We started with trucking for two simple reasons:

1. There is a national trucking shortage crisis. Connecticut companies and those across the country don't have enough truck drivers.
2. The driver shortage is so severe that people are hired regardless of their criminal record.

Bill 334 is a win-win-win.

1. Connecticut trucking companies will have more truckers to hire
2. CT's incarcerated persons will get second chance to rebuild their lives post-release and will have hope while on the inside
3. Connecticut will have less recidivism, saving taxpayers money

Here's how our Virtual Trucking Program Works:

1. We provide CT DOC ruggedized Ameelio tablets or laptops (or we can work off existing hardware in the facility)
2. Incarcerated students are given access to our proprietary Virtual CLP program course through our secure educational platform
3. Students are able to watch videos and take quizzes and practice tests
4. Once they're scoring at-least 80% we schedule a CLP examination for them
5. Some students will be hired with just a Commercial Learner's permit alone given the increase in apprenticeship programs
6. Others upon release will enroll at our partner driving ranges to earn their CDLs

Impact - not profit - is our goal:

1. Our CDL model requires the bulk of Ameelio payment only upon the student's successful completion of the exam
2. If selected as a vendor, we will have greater reach than the vocational village, which aims to serve 15 students a year. We are currently already serving over 50 formerly incarcerated students in New Haven right now.
3. We can save the state money by shifting resource and hiring obligations away from DOC



Working with Ameelio to deliver in prison CLP training will be superior to burdening the DOC with this role, because as a technology company that's currently serving thousands of incarcerated people across the country, we are well equipped to deliver incredible virtual resources at scale.

Given our expertise working with Departments of Corrections across the country, we believe the rollout of our virtual CLP program inside Connecticut prisons will be smooth.

We will provide:

- CT DOC ruggedized tablets and/or laptops
- We provide customer service, so this burden will not fall on staff
- We also provide virtual and in-person training to DOC staff on how to navigate the virtual CLP Course.

In summary, Ameelio is ready and willing to provide CLP and CDL training to incarcerated individuals in Connecticut. We firmly believe that a public-private partnership is integral to solving Connecticut's trucking shortage and driving down recidivism through job training. I urge you to support this bill. I'd be happy to answer any questions.