

# Judiciary Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6875

AN ACT CONCERNING THE ISSUANCE OF A STATE IDENTIFICATION CARD OR MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATOR'S LICENSE TO A PERSON BEING

**Title:** DISCHARGED FROM A CORRECTIONAL FACILITY.

**Vote Date:** 3/27/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable

**PH Date:** 3/15/2023

**File No.:**

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Judiciary Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

After serving a lengthy prison sentence, some individuals may not have identification cards which hinders their re-entry into society. This bill will ensure that individuals being released from prison can obtain a state identification card or a motor vehicle operator's license when that person is released.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Benedict Daigle, Assistant Public Defender, Office of Chief Public Defender:** The Chief Public Defender supports the bill, stating that treating released inmates with respect and assisting to remove any barriers can help to reduce recidivism and reintegration of the individual into society. The Chief Public Defender supports waiving fees for the individuals.

**Angel Quiros, Commissioner, Department of Correction (DOC):** The Commissioner supports efforts to provide identification and the testifier notes that there is already a procedure to provide ID cards no less than 60 days before discharge. The DOC reports that in 2022, 91% of those discharged from facilities had at least one form of identification. The DOC has several concerns with the requirements from the bill. The first being that not all charged individuals are sentenced to the 24-month timeframe at which a review is ordered and processed for individuals scheduled to leave the facilities. Similarly, the Social Security Administration requires individuals to be no more than 180 days from release before they can be issued Social Security cards. Either a birth certificate or a Social Security card is required to obtain a real ID, posing an issue with the process being extended over the 180-day

timeframe. This extends complications further to individuals born in Puerto Rico, as they will not provide a birth certificate without valid ID. They also have a concern with the level of extra staffing this bill will require; currently 30 individuals make the trip to the DMV for the MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution to complete the paperwork monthly. This team will have to be replicated at each of the 12 other institutions to facilitate an expansion to all discharges.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Courtney Bourns:** The testifier supports helping released inmates reintegrate with society by providing them with identification.

**Denise Boyd, Board Member, Second Chance Tiny House Housing:** The testifier supports providing released inmates with identification, as less than half return home with proper identification under current procedure.

**Andrew Clark, Director, Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, UCONN:** The testifier supports the bill, as well as a transition to a Norway style corrections system.

**Amy Epstein, Attorney, New Haven Legal Assistance Association:** The testifier supports the move to grant identification. The testifier knows of a case of an individual being stuck without identification and subject to eviction, and unable to access help with the eviction without identification. The testifier believes the bill should waive fees associated with the identification.

**Barbara Fair, LCSW, Stop Solitary CT:** The testifier supports the effort to provide identification although was under the impression the effort was already in effect from a bill a decade ago.

**Seth Freeman, President, Congress of CT Community Colleges SEIU 1973:** The testifier supports the bill, noting that less than half of patients at Transition Clinic Network return home with adequate identification.

**Tracie Guzman, Leader with Smart Justice Campaign, ACLU:** The testifier experienced many individuals who are unable to accept job offers because of lack of identification whilst working as a re-entry case manager in Waterbury, as well as noting the many other things which require identification.

**Annie Harper:** The testifier has researched the association between access to finance and poverty whilst working at the Yale School of Medicine at the Department of Psychiatry. She notes that those without access to bank accounts are forced to use alternative financial services, such as prepaid cards, check-cashers, pawnshops etc., which can incur high fees of up to \$2,400 annually. Similarly, they are unable to build credit, limiting future possibilities. The testifier conducted a study which found only one in five formerly incarcerated individuals with health ailments or over fifty years of age had a bank account. The testifier recounted an anecdote of an individual who could not remember his account information, and did not have the identification to prove ownership, and was therefore unable to access it.

**Marcus Harvin, Fellow, CHW Transitions Clinic:** The testifier recounts their own personal experience being released just 300 days prior to submission, and how the only identification was a letter stating their release, which proved insufficient for lawful employment. In the testifiers opinion it felt akin to a slave being allowed to travel outside the perimeter of the plantation, a degrading dehumanizing feeling which constantly reminded them they were formerly incarcerated.

**Margaret Henderson, President, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury:** The testifier notes the requirement of identification for employment, housing, benefits, and health care. The testifier acknowledges current law allows for identification; however, it must be inmate led and can cost them financially. The testifier supports waiving the fees and moving the initiative to the DOC.

**Shelby Henderson, Transitions Clinic Network:** The testifier links the need for identification to healthcare and employment; the testifier has personal experience in halfway houses with individuals who spend months struggling to get ID.

**Elizabeth Hines, Executive Director, Community Partners in Action (CPA):** The testifier states that CPA halfway houses experience high numbers of the formerly incarcerated turning up without ID, slowing down their reintegration into society. The testifier worked in the 1990s to get discharged peoples government ID, which took significant time; they would like to see the process moved to between 12 and 18 months before an inmate is released.

**Nadine Horton, Panel Manager, Transition Clinic New Haven:** The testifier is in favor of helping released persons reintegrate into society, with identification helping to facilitate employment, housing, benefits, and healthcare. The testifier supports waiving fees for identification, with \$28 being a substantial burden on persons who have little to nothing.

**Benjamin Howell, Assistant Professor, Yale School of Medicine:** The testifier notes the twelve-fold higher chance of dying released persons have in the first two weeks after release. The testifier supports removing the barrier for reintegration into society.

**Curtis Hudson, Smart Justice Leader, ACLU:** The testifier supports from a personal experience, with reintegration into society being delayed for several weeks whilst waiting for mail to serve as proof of evidence, all whilst requiring financial backing. The testifier notes that on prison wages \$28 is a substantial investment.

**Melissa Johnson, Director of Community Engagement, YWCA Hartford Region:** The testifier notes the high number of individuals returning home without proper identification. The testifier supports reducing recidivism by providing a path to reintegration.

**Philip Kent:** The testifier supports simplifying the system, increasing the number of individuals leaving DOC facilities with the correct identification to prove who they are.

**Marcella LaBelle:** The testifier expresses disappointment with the DOC for not providing identification, which facilitates reintegration.

**Maureen Lopes, Criminal Legal Reform Team, CONECT:** The testifier supports the bill, as identification is the cornerstone to apply for other necessary documents.

**Josh Pawelek, Minister, Recovery for All:** The testifier supports granting identification, as it is vital for other necessary resources such as housing, employment, and health care.

**Alana Rosenberg, Research Associate, SEICHE Center:** The testifier supports the bill, as identification is a necessary document to access other required resources. Stemming from experience working with released inmates, the testifier notes the high anticipation and ambition felt by recently released individuals in the first week; without holding ID, individuals can get slowed down by long wait times, all whilst being unable to sustain their personal needs.

**Lauren Ruth, Policy Fellow, Connecticut Voices for Children:** The testifier supports providing photo identification, as it is essential to many other required resources. The testifier expresses issue with the process requiring the prisoners to show initiative to request the ID, preferring an automated system which offers ID. The testifier notes the successful Michigan program which reduced recidivism rates by half. The testifier also notes the statistical link between those with ID and those working two months after release, as well as the link between those working within two months and those who do not return to prison.

**Monya Saunders, Transitions Clinic:** The testifier supports providing identification, as it is essential to other resources. The testifier expresses concern at the current number of individuals returning home without the proper ID. The testifier personally coordinated primary care appointments for DOC discharged individuals, where significant issues arise from the lack of identification.

**Chris Senecal, Senior Public Policy Officer, Hartford Foundation:** The testifier works on the outside to facilitate reintegration, the foundation of which relies upon ID. The testifier notes that experience has shown DOC requires further resources to cover fees and staffing issues related to paperwork.

**Amani Shirley:** The testifier supports the bill because of the hurdles obtaining ID on the outside is to re-entry into society.

**Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Council, ACLU:** The testifier notes the difficulty reintegrating into society is without proper identification. This limiting factor prevents many from accessing the resources needed; current law only goes so far as to allow for ID, it does not take the initiative to offer inmates the ID they will need once released.

**James Bhandary, Legal Director, Transitions Clinic Network:** The testifier supports the bill, noting the possible scenarios which occur to inmates, with a lack of transparency of the process when providing information to future discharge persons being a key issue in the scenarios.

**Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Advisor, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance:** The testifier takes issue with the lack of checks and balances in the current system, as too many are released without adequate identification. Given that reducing recidivism is a main goal, the testifier believes the expansion of the current system, including waiving the fees associated, is an important step.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None expressed.

**Reported by:** James McNealey

**Date:** April 6, 2023