



H.B. No. 5035 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Good evening, Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobran, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jeff Grant and I am Executive Director of Family ReEntry. Founded in 1984 in Bridgeport, Family ReEntry's mission is to develop, implement, and share innovative and cost-effective solutions to the unprecedented numbers of people involved in the criminal justice system. We contract with the Connecticut Department of Correction and the Court Support Services Division, as well as other state agencies, to provide services inside and outside of prison, in support of DOC's mission to "protect the public" and "provide offenders with opportunities for successful community reintegration." Our high-impact services for youth and families tackle the root causes of violent crime through evidence-based *social, cognitive and behavioral* interventions that restore healthy family functioning and assist returning citizens in becoming positive contributing members of society. For example, participants in our court-referred domestic/family violence programs (n=1539) for 2014-2015 had a re-arrest rate of 8%, which is 60% lower than the program benchmark for re-arrest rates set by the state (20%).

I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the bold steps that this administration has taken to reduce the numbers of people in prison through criminal justice reform and Second Chance Society legislation. Having served thirteen and a half months in a federal prison myself for a white-collar crime in 2001, I can personally attest to the humanitarian value of second chances. Without the support from my wife, the faith community and opportunities to volunteer with Family ReEntry when I came out of prison, it is unlikely that I would be standing before you today as a tax-paying citizen, non-profit leader and advocate for returning citizens.

With more individuals returning from prison and jail to our communities, it is all the more urgent that we increase our investment in community services to ensure that recidivism rates do not increase. Research shows that when individuals returning from prison do not have the social supports and resources they need to rebuild their lives, they are much more likely to commit another crime and return to prison within one to three years of release.ⁱ The first six months in reentry are a critical time for intervention and for linking individuals without the necessary supports to much needed behavioral health, housing, legal aid and other rehabilitative services.ⁱⁱ Reentry service providers are on the front-lines in preventing other critical problems our state faces as well, including overdose deathsⁱⁱⁱ and children from witnessing domestic violence.

Evidence-based community programs yield significant returns on investment by reducing recidivism. As stated in a PEW Center on the States report^{iv}:

Policy makers must confront the reality that, for the foreseeable future, roughly seven out of every ten offenders will continue to serve all or part of their sentences in the community. Ensuring public safety and balancing a budget, then, require states to strengthen badly neglected community corrections systems, so they can become credible options for more of the lowest risk offenders who otherwise would be in prison.

The non-partisan Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21st Century (CT21) report^v concerning the fiscal future of our state---recommends that, “The current Department of Correction re-entry programs *both internal and community based* need to be funded and sustained” and they also warn that “*Connecticut must resist temptation to reduce funding for these programs.*” A 2006 national opinion survey likewise indicates that the general public also favors rehabilitative services for offenders, as opposed to a punishment-only approach by an almost 8 to 1 margin^{vi}.

As the state continues to garner cost savings from criminal justice reform measures, it would behoove the state legislature to increase the state’s investment in reentry services as part of justice reinvestment. Everyone will be the beneficiary from front-line investments that will help restore healthy families, increase public safety, rebuild our communities and continue to reduce our prison population.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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ⁱ Kempker, G., Gibel, S., Giguere, R. A (2010) *Framework for Offender Reentry*. Silver Spring, Maryland. Center for Effective Public Policy.

ⁱⁱ Source: Draine, J., & Herman, D. B. (2007). Critical time intervention for reentry from prison for persons with mental illness. *Psychiatric Services*, 58(12), 1577-1581.

ⁱⁱⁱ Yale’s 2016 plan for Connecticut Opioid Response (CORE) states that 44 percent of fatal overdoses in Connecticut occurred among individuals who had a history of having been detained by the DOC. For individuals with an opioid disorder released from DOC, *60% of overdose deaths occurred within six months of their release*. Retrieved from <http://www.plan4children.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/COREInitiativeForPublicComment.pdf>

^{iv} Source: *One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections*; PEW Center on the States; March 2009; page 22

^v Source: BlumShapiro (2010). Connecticut Regional Institute for the 21st Century: Assessment of Connecticut’s Correction, Pardon and Parole (Report No. 2). Retrieved from <http://www.ct21.org/attachments/article/116/prisonreportppt.pdf>: page 37 [emphasis added].

^{vi} Krisberg, B. & Marchionna, S. (2006). *Attitudes of U.S. Voters Toward Prisoner Rehabilitation and Reentry Policies*. Oakland, CA: National Council on Crime and Delinquency.