



Luke A. Bronin
Mayor

March 4, 2021

Chairman Lopes, Chairman McGee, Senator Cicarella, Representative Polletta, and members of the Housing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **S.B. 875, An Act Concerning the Risk of Homelessness For Those Released From the Custody of the Department of Correction.**

As you may know, we opened a Reentry Welcome Center (RWC) in Hartford City Hall in 2018, and since then hundreds of returning citizens from Hartford and the surrounding region have walked through its doors. The RWC is focused on serving those who are completing their sentences, but its doors are open to any returning citizens. It works directly with the Department of Correction to facilitate many drop-offs directly outside the center, so that individuals returning from prison walk into an environment where experienced staff are eager to help them. But the gap between the support returning citizens have and the resources currently available remains significant.

Aside from employment, the lack of secure housing is the biggest need that many returning citizens face, and people returning from incarceration are nearly ten times more likely to become homeless.¹ Without housing, it's that much more difficult for each returning citizen to overcome the other challenges they face. From a broader policy perspective, focusing our attention and resources on successful housing transitions is an effective way to help reduce recidivism.²

We know that the Department of Correction (DOC) is committed to supporting successful reentry, including through its Reentry Housing Assistance Program (RHAP). Since the pandemic began last spring, the RWC and its partners have served 77 individuals referred by the DOC through the RHAP. Working with community organizations, we've made sure none of those individuals have been released from custody onto the street.

This bill would require the DOC to expand that work and create a "returning home" program, working with community organizations to provide support and resources to ensure those leaving their custody find stable housing. The elements of this program, including housing search and navigation services, housing-related case management, and rapid rehousing and related services, are effective tools. To do them well, they require a great deal of effort and coordination, and so it's vital to match these new requirements with the resources to carry them out them.

We urge the Committee and the General Assembly to enact this legislation and to give the Department of Correction the resources to implement it well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luke A. Bronin", is written over a horizontal line.

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¹ Prison Policy Initiative, "Nowhere to Go: Homelessness Among Formerly Incarcerated People," [August 2018](#).

² Urban Institute, "Supportive Housing for Returning Prisoners: Outcomes and Impacts of the Returning Home-Ohio Pilot Project," [August 15, 2012](#).

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