



Testimony of Taylor Ford
Member of Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice
Testimony for the Judicial Committee Public Hearing
SB 987: An Act Concerning Reinvestment of Savings Achieved Through a
Reduction In Correctional Facility Population Into Reentry and
Community-Based Services and Programs,
March 10th, 2021

Good Afternoon,

My name is Taylor Ford, I am a member of the Katal Center for Health, Equity and Justice and I am in support of SB 987: An Act Concerning Reinvestment of Savings Achieved Through A Reduction in Correctional Facility Population into Reentry and Community-Based Services and Programs.

As written, the proposed bill outlines an effort to appropriate funds to state Departments of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Public Health and Corrections to invest in supporting individuals find and maintain housing, mental and physical health upon release from the custody of the Department of Corrections. To have monies specifically reserved for the employment and training of formerly incarcerated individuals as community health workers, reentry and housing case management, correctional health care and mobile crisis response along with an intended reentry strategy that will include gender responsive approaches to address unique risks and needs are steps in the right direction.

Concerningly, the risk assessment that the Department of Corrections, Board of Pardons and Paroles and the Court Support Services Division plan to utilize is not required to be created in partnership with any of the community-based supports that express an expertise in the area. Not involving the community-based services and programs in this initial step can result in important information being missed on this tool as the language in the bill states that the department, board and division may partner with an educational institution that has expertise in criminal justice and psychiatry.

While SB 987 covers monetary investment in programs and services that will elevate communities in Connecticut, we must pay close attention and be intentional about *how* programs and services are performed. Time and time again money is poured into agencies and state departments like the DOC but practices remain the same. This

perpetuates the dangerous cycles which disproportionately affect incarcerated people and their health and well being leading to the failure of their reintegration that supports recidivism.

At the Katal Center, we are engaged in a new campaign called #CutShutINVEST. This campaign is designed to ensure that Connecticut:

- **Cut** the number of people incarcerated in jails and prisons. Cut the number of people on probation and parole;
- **Shut** prisons down;
- **Invest** in the communities most harmed by systemic racism and mass incarceration, into housing, healthcare, education, jobs, and more.

As the number of incarcerated people has decreased in the state and we move forward with the closure of prisons, reinvestment into communities that have been most impacted by systemic racism and mass incarceration; specifically Black and Brown communities should be emphasized in this bill. Currently, 6,534 of the 9,059 incarcerated people are Black and Latinx. Community based service and program success should be reflected by a decrease in the number of Black, brown and Latinx people in the carceral system.

While SB 987 can set a baseline for how money can and should be reinvested in the transition out of DOC custody, there are important and necessary pieces that are missing. The bill should be explicit in outlining how facility closure and decreasing population savings will be reinvested and appropriated into community-based services. The opportunity to work in partnership with established services and programs immediately in the creation of the strategy needs to be taken if the state wants formerly incarcerated individuals to be successful in their reentry.

Thank you,

Taylor Ford