

Rev. Abraham Hernandez – Testimony in Favor SB 572

Good evening members of the Public Safety and Security Committee

I, Rev. Abraham Hernandez, serve as the Executive Chapter Director of Connecticut's Chapter of the NHCLC (National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference) that represents over 300 Hispanic Evangelical churches in the state. I respectfully write regarding legislation **SB 572: An Act Concerning Community Crisis Response Team (CCRT) programs and Reentry Welcome Centers.**

I believe that in having a Community Crisis Response Team it would grant municipalities the ability to create a support infrastructure for residents who, versus being incarcerated would be extended an olive branch to receive treatment and services during moments of crisis they may be battling with.

The CCRT will have the capability to respond to 911 calls for calls that may stem from welfare check calls, people that are homeless, people who are suffering with a mental disorder episode, substance abuse individuals. This groundbreaking social service approach will drastically reduce the prison population rate and serve as a preventive measure that will reduce visits to emergency rooms throughout the state and take a significant step to deter people from unnecessary visits to the emergency room.

The Reentry Welcome Center programs will ensure that men and women released from a prison will be able to meet with experts equipped and willing to provide support to connect these individuals with social services on the very same day they are released from prison. Esteemed legislators, SB572 will go a significant way in calming the anxieties many prisoners too often face when released and walk past the prison fence as they are reintroduced into society. Too many of our released prisoner are facing insurmountable challenges when they're glad to be free, but all to find themselves without a family and any realistic support system. We need to create a system to help individuals that do not have a clue how to reintegrate themselves into society in a seamless and practical manner and it is precisely what this piece of legislation will do.

I would like to about our men and women in blue... For too many years our police force has needed to respond to calls of people with underlying mental health issues and via our news networks, we have seen the tragic loss of innocent lives. SB 572 will be able to relieve the pressures our police officers work under when an individual is threatening the safety of others, due to mental ailments.

With budget challenges that our municipalities are facing, which has caused our police forces to be drastically reduced makes it even more important for our officers to tend to pressing matters. The officers will be able to tend to pressing public safety emergency calls, while crisis response teams can address issues of individuals who need mental health treatment instead of incarceration.

For way too long, as a member of the Cleric community, I have seen firsthand how individuals released from prison system have unsurmountable mountains of challenges to climb as they attempt to reintegrate themselves into society. Their challenges range from accessing housing and employment while battling substance use disorder, mental health issues, and chronic medical illness. My experience has been that people who don't have a good support system contribute to the revolving door of relapse and high recidivism rate as repeat offenders. The Reentry Welcome Centers will ensure that people are connected to these services on the day of they are released from a penitentiary, instead of finding

themselves out in the street again where they're more prone to become engaged in nefarious activities again.

Once again, I respectfully ask that you approve SB572 - An Act Concerning Community Crisis Response Team (CCRT) programs and Reentry Welcome Centers

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