

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I hope you are well. My name is Don Sawyer, and I currently serve as chair of the board for EMERGE Connecticut, Inc. On Friday, February 26, three staff members from EMERGE will come before you to highlight our transformative re-entry program in New Haven, CT, and ask for your continued support. I am writing with full confidence in the EMERGE model, and I am asking you to approve their request for continued and increased funding of this uniquely successful program.

Their presentation/testimony will highlight EMERGE's success in New Haven, CT. You will see that only 12% of EMERGE crewmembers are reincarcerated within two years of release, compared to 47% in the state of Connecticut. Also, 70% of EMERGE crewmembers exit to employment or education, with 73% still working one year later. These results are possible because EMERGE works alongside formerly incarcerated individuals seeking a supportive and healthy transition home from incarceration through paid employment, training, academic tutoring, counseling, peer-mentorship, coaching, and other trauma-informed services.

They will request renewal of \$150,000/year from the Department of Corrections (DOC) and an additional \$150,000/year from the Judicial Branch - Court Support Services Division (CSSD). With this funding, EMERGE aims to achieve three crucial goals:

- Expand services from 25 people on parole annually to an additional 25 people on probation through CSSD funds and increased staffing.
- Meet New Haven mayor Justin Elicker's vested interest in growing EMERGE by securing increased number of city construction contracts through supporting and training a larger EMERGE workforce.
- Create career pathways to long-term stable employment via the growing demand from local unions (carpentry, bricklaying, etc.) for more people of color. EMERGE has a proven track record in successful placement.

The additional \$150,000/year from CSSD is critical as EMERGE locates its work in the broader effort to end mass incarceration and its inequitable toll on Black and Brown communities in Connecticut.

I affirm that EMERGE has the program model, the vision, and results to support these additional people on probation in their successful journeys back to their families and communities. Again, I humbly ask that you continue to support this program and increase funding to serve an expanded portion of the population.

Sincerely,

Don C. Sawyer III, Ph.D.

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Vice President for Equity and Inclusion

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