

Good Morning Representatives Walker and France, Senators Osten and Miner and the members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Eulalia Garcia, District Administrator for the Department of Correction representing Angel Quiros, the Commissioner who is unable to testify in person. I am here to indicate the Department's strong support of Section 11 of Senate Bill 885, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for General Government which will establish a Chief Workforce Officer and an Office of Workforce Strategy.

The Department of Correction (DOC) has been ramping up its efforts to assist inmates in obtaining job skills, certifications and employment opportunities when they return to the community. The Office of Workforce Strategy has already been helping DOC in these efforts and I see enormous benefits to Returning Citizens in the future by working close together. DOC believes a Chief Workforce Officer will assist it in working with the state, federal, private sector employers and non-profit agencies which can provide employment & workforce training services to Returning Citizens.

In particular, the Chief Workforce Officer and the Office of Workforce Strategy are uniquely suited to support DOC in establishing on-going relationships with manufacturers and other private sector employers. Commissioner Quiros wants to bring companies inside DOC as part of the federal Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program to provide inmates with prevailing wages, marketable skills and realistic work environments. Before COVID last year, DOC's Correctional Enterprises Director was in the process of doing this. The Chief Workforce Officer and Office of Workforce Strategy have the ability to reinvigorate this effort in the near term. The Department also believes the Chief Workforce Officer and Office of Workforce Strategy can greatly assist DOC in deciding which Vocational Education programming our Unified School District # 1 should be providing so that inmates have work skills that CT employers need.

In closing, the Department of Correction commends Governor Lamont for moving forward with this initiative which will increase employment opportunities for Returning Citizens. The Department urges the Committee to vote in favor of SB 885. I will be happy to answer your questions.