

Commerce Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-101

AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR INCARCERATED PERSONS AND PERSONS REENTERING THE COMMUNITY

Title: AFTER INCARCERATION.

Vote Date: 03/18/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/22/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56th Dist.

Rep. Travis Simms, 140th Dist.

Rep. Gary A. Turco, 27th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

Committee Bill No. 101 requires the commissioner of Economic and Community Development to Evaluate workforce development programs for incarcerated persons and persons reentering the community after incarceration, and create an employer toolkit to facilitate such person's employment. According to the National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction, there are over 550 collateral consequences that those living with a criminal record face. These consequences are sanctions and restrictions that limit or prohibit past offenders from accessing employment, housing, education, Etc. Without the proper tools or income to rebuild their lives, recidivism can often become an issue with past offenders. As such, Committee Bill No. 101 will be another step in ensuring that people with a criminal record have the opportunity to work and contribute to society, by evaluating workforce programs that aid such individuals, and creating the employer toolkit which will highlight the array of services and support available to them.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Alexandra Daum & Paul O. Robertson, Deputy Commissioners, Department of Economic and Community Development.

Both Deputy Commissioner Daum and Deputy Commissioner Robertson voiced that modifications be made to Committee Bill 101. Firstly, they suggest that Sec. 1 be amended to

assign the evaluation and reporting requirement to the Office of Workforce Strategy, instead of DECD. Secondly, they recommend extending the due date for said report to 01/01/2024, to allow federally funded programs related to workforce development programs for incarcerated, and formerly incarcerated, persons to become operational and to ensure there is adequate staff at OWS to complete this work. Thirdly, they recommend eliminating Sec. 2 as the DOC, in collaboration with the CBIA and the society for Human Resource Management, are already developing an employers' Fair Chance Hiring Toolkit.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut Hospital Association

The Connecticut Hospital Association voiced support for Committee Bill No. 101, as it requires the DECD to evaluate the effectiveness of the states' current workforce development programs for incarcerated persons, or persons now reentering the community, and develops an employer toolkit to facilitate the employment of incarcerated persons prior to or immediately after release from incarceration. The CHA believes that this will be another step towards ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to succeed, as formerly incarcerated individuals deserve a fair chance to participate in the American economy.

Hartford Foundation For Public Giving

The Hartford Foundation For Public Giving voiced support for Committee Bill No. 101, as they are in favor of ensuring access to education and workforce development programs for incarcerated men and women as they rebuild their lives within the community, so as to prepare them for employment and successful reentry. They further emphasize that the creation of the employer toolkit will be useful, as it will help facilitate employment of people returning from incarceration by highlighting the array of services and supports available to them, while also ensuring that workers are supported in being successful in the workplace.

Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy & Division Advisor, The Alliance

The Alliance voiced support for Committee Bill No. 101, as it seeks to require the Commissioner of DECD to (1) evaluate workforce development programs for incarcerated persons and persons reentering the community after incarceration, and (2) create an employer toolkit to facilitate such persons' employment. The Alliance believes that this would be an important step in addressing issues related to meaningful employment for people living with a criminal record. The Alliance also recommends that the committee adds language in the bill to include the perspectives of formerly incarcerated individuals, as well as nonprofit job developers.

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut.

Ms. Zaccagnino voiced support for Committee Bill No. 101, as it will help those who have been convicted or accused of a crime to have equal opportunity to contribute to society, while also aiding in the elimination of collateral consequences for said individuals. The Alliance also believes that the creation of the employer toolkit will help disseminate myths about employing people with a criminal record. Furthermore, Ms. Zaccagnino states that the beneficiaries of the program should also have a voice, and as such urges the Committee of Commerce to require the DECD to consult with both former and currently incarcerated individuals when creating the employer toolkit.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

N/A

Reported by: Ben McSheehy

Date: 3/29/2022