



Legislative Testimony
765 Asylum Avenue, First Floor
Hartford, CT 06105
860-523-9146
www.acluct.org

**Written Testimony Supporting
House Bill 5531, An Act Concerning Enhanced
Employment Opportunities for Incarcerated Individuals**

Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is David McGuire, and I am executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 5531, An Act Concerning Enhanced Employment Opportunities for Incarcerated Individuals.

The ACLU-CT supports efforts to expand employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated people. By requiring the Department of Correction to establish a job training program that would allow incarcerated people to qualify for apprenticeships after their release, this bill is good public policy.

For this program to truly work and be meaningful, though, there must be occupational licensing reform to allow people with criminal records to become licensed in more occupations. There is evidence that removing barriers to employment for people with criminal convictions improves the wellbeing and strength of families and communities. As the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has noted, “unemployment is associated with a variety of negative health effects,” while employment can create the “income, benefits, and stability necessary for good health.” While licensure does not guarantee employment, it is an important entry point toward securing a steady income in a number of occupations.

For someone reentering society, a fair chance at a job can break the cycles of poverty and crime by allowing them to support themselves and their loved ones. Studies show that making it easier for people with criminal records to find adequate employment significantly decreases the likelihood that they will return to our criminal justice system. In addition, we know that the majority of people entering the criminal justice system in Connecticut have children. As a result, discriminatory job licensure bans do not just harm formerly incarcerated people—they harm children and families. Particularly in this difficult economic climate, the Connecticut General Assembly should do all that it can to help people with

criminal records and their families to succeed. Because people of color are nearly three times more likely to have a criminal record than their white peers, discriminatory licensure practices based on criminal record also disproportionately harm African Americans and Latinos.

We encourage the committee to add language to this bill requiring occupational licensing reform and to support the bill.