



State of Connecticut
Governor Dannel P. Malloy

“SECOND CHANCE SOCIETY”

Reclassify Drug Offenses to Send Fewer Non-Violent Individuals to Jail

Ineffective drug policies have swelled Connecticut prisons and created lifetime offenders who struggle to find work and reintegrate into society. Connecticut can send fewer non-violent individuals to jail by reducing penalties for certain drug crimes:

Classify possession of drugs as a misdemeanor unless there is intent to sell. Unless there is evidence that an individual is selling or dealing drugs, the use or possession of drugs will be classified as a misdemeanor.

In the last five years, about a dozen states, including South Carolina, California, Arkansas and Georgia, have reduced drug possession penalties by limiting or repealing mandatory minimum sentences for certain drug related offenses.

Eliminate Mandatory Minimums for Non-Violent Drug Possession

Eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for drug possession. Judges will still have discretion to impose a range of sentences based on the facts and circumstances of each individual case.

Between 2009 and 2013, 11 states have repealed or shortened mandatory minimums: New York, Rhode Island, Colorado, South Carolina, Arkansas, Delaware, Ohio, Georgia, Massachusetts, Missouri and Oklahoma.

Streamline Parole Hearings to Reduce Backlogs and Make Process More Efficient and Effective

There are many parole applications from non-violent, low risk inmates that are unnecessarily delayed or, in some cases, never heard by the Board at all. In recent years, the Board has not been able to conduct hearings in advance of the parole eligibility dates for non-violent offenders due to a backlog of cases and inadequate staff resources.

Expedited Parole. The Board of Pardons and Parole has recommended a number of changes to streamline their processes, including creation of an optional hearing process for cases involving low-level, non-violent individuals. Current law requires a formal hearing in every parole case, and that will not be changed. Three-person panels will continue to receive relevant background information on each offender, use "structured decision making", and make written findings in each case, but the Board will have the option of not requiring the inmate to be present in certain cases relating to non-violent, victimless crimes. The Board will continue to use state-of-the-art screening tools to identify high-risk and/or violent inmates and to subject those parole applications to more elaborate scrutiny, such as victim input and psychological screening.

Passing this legislation would bring Connecticut in line with most other states. West Virginia and Colorado, for example, have taken steps to offer parole at the earliest possible date to certain inmates who pose less risk to the community. Similarly, Ohio, employs a risk-based administrative parole decision making process for low risk, non-violent offenders when there is no victim involved.

Streamline the Pardons Process to Give Ex-Offenders a Greater Chance at Employment

There are too many non-violent ex-offenders for whom employment is a practical impossibility because of a felony conviction and a debt long ago paid. Clarifying the expedited pardons process will help these individuals have a realistic chance at a full pardon after they complete their probation or jail sentence, followed by several years of responsible citizenship. The road to full citizenship and real opportunity, a genuine second chance, should not be paved with legal land mines.

Expedited pardons. The Board of Pardons and Parole has highlighted that the existing statute governing "administrative pardons" has complexities that effectively disqualify many individuals that would otherwise likely be good candidates for expedited pardons. Elimination of some of this complexity would make it easier for the Board to consider applications.

In addition, new notifications will be given to ex-offenders (1) when they are sentenced, (2) when they are released from probation, and (3) when they leave the custody of the Commissioner of Correction. These notices will inform ex-offenders of the date they will become eligible for a pardon, and of what they need to do to make that pardon a reality.

Assist Individuals Re-Entering Society and Provide Opportunities for Success

The quickest and most effective way to give someone the second chance they need to be a productive member of society is to ensure access to job and housing opportunities upon release.

Expand Automatic Post-Prison Employment Program. Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) is currently a pilot program in Connecticut based upon the state of Washington's nationally recognized model. I-BEST is an evidence-based model that provides

vocational skills training simultaneously with adult basic education. The curriculum is designed jointly and classes are co-taught by an adult education instructor and a specialist in the appropriate vocational field. The I-BEST model has proven to help participants improve their basic skills and/or achieve or progress towards a secondary education credential while attaining an industry-recognized credential.

In addition, we will partner with community and non-profit leaders to find employment opportunities for offenders to get on their feet and start producing for our economy.

In many communities, individuals are caught cycling in and out of crisis services, which are provided at a high expense to the state. By investing in effective models of care, we can produce better long term individual and systemic outcomes.

Invest in Supportive Housing for Frequent Users. The CT Collaborative on Re-entry (CCR) is a supportive housing program aimed at a small set of individuals in Connecticut that repeatedly cycle in and out of our corrections system. These individuals have complex unmet needs, histories of long-term homelessness, chronic health conditions, untreated mental illness and addictions, and they play a significant role in escalating health, emergency service and correctional system costs. The total lifetime cost to state and local government for just 30 men and women eligible for the CCR program is more than \$12 million in jail and shelter services alone, if they were to be left in their current cyclical pattern. The CCR program reduces public sector costs and improves outcomes by providing housing, health care, mental health services, addiction treatment and counseling to its targeted population. This innovative approach has been shown to reduce recidivism from 90% to 40% in its participants.

There are currently 100 individuals being served by the CCR (formerly known as Frequent User Systems Engagement, or "FUSE") and Governor Malloy is proposing that, over the next several years, that number be increased to 400.