



*Connecticut Puerto Rican Forum, Inc.*

*95 Park Street*

*Hartford, CT 06106*

*(860) 247-3227*

*fax: (860) 549-5761*

*www.ctpuertoricanforum.org*

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Good morning. My name is Lou Paturzo and I am the coordinator of the New Day Program. The New Day Program is part of the Building Bridges initiative and provides a range of pre and post release services to Hartford residents. We operate as a pilot at the Carl Robinson Correctional Institution in Enfield where we meet with inmates twice weekly to assist them in their preparation for a successful transition from prison to their community in Hartford. Upon release we provide housing for up to 20 participants at one of two houses rented and supervised by the New Day staff. In addition to housing the New Day Program assists with employment services, referrals to other agencies for resources, and intensive case management by New Day staff.

Working closely with Hartford Parole and Probation staff we provide an additional layer of both support and supervision for men released into the Hartford community.

We would be most willing to meet with any members of our legislature to provide a tour of our residential sites, meet with program staff, or meet with the participants of our program. I can be reached at the Connecticut Puerto Rican Forum (860) 247-3227 ext. 13.

As the Legislature looks to address the issues related to the release on parole of Connecticut inmates we would like to express our own concerns.

At the present time inmates convicted of crimes categorized as violent crimes have had their parole suspended. The governor has indicated this was done in the interest of public safety. We believe it will have the opposite effect.

Before this suspension of parole inmates convicted of violent offenses were serving a minimum of 85% of their sentence before they could be released on parole. These are the very inmates who most need the transitional support and supervision that parole can provide.

The alternative, under the present directive, will see inmates completing their sentence and being returned to our community without support or supervision. During the time immediately following release from prison most ex-offenders face a variety of obstacles to a successful transition. It is especially at this time that ex-offenders need the structure parole can provide. Parole can mean curfew, electronic monitoring, mandated attendance in substance abuse and other groups as well as the support and resources available to those on parole.

Our program offers the support of a safe structured residence, employment assistance, a 30 day bus pass to go to appointments or job interviews, help with getting a state ID, and the help of a case manager to maneuver around potential obstacles to a successful re-entry.

Two years ago we accepted into our residence an inmate who had served a sentence for robbery. He had failed one period on parole and had been returned to prison. He entered our residence and within a week had found employment. He indicated to us that he had a safe place to live for the first time since he was 13 years of age. In January he will be out

for two years without a violation. He has worked full time and met a new circle of friends. He met a woman at work who had never had any contact with the law and now resides with her in their own apartment. They receive no state aid and are accepting responsibility for their own support.

Without the New Day Program and the supervision afforded by Hartford Parole he would have returned to Hartford with no place to live and only his old negative support system. With parole he found both the support and supervision he needed at a critical time. In addition to the indefinite suspension of those convicted of violent crimes, those convicted of non-violent crime have had their parole suspended pending a re-review of their file. Only now inmates are beginning to be released but we believe problems remain:

1. The prisons are over-crowded. Not only are they over-crowded but many of the inmates have worked diligently to prepare for their return home. Their parole had been suspended not because of anything they had done but because of events beyond their control.
2. Since Commissioner Lantz has made transition a part of the mission of the Department of Correction there has been a new sense of hope on the part of the inmates. They had begun to believe that they could work successfully toward their own rehabilitation. The governor's decision has undone much of what the Commissioner has achieved. There is now frustration and cynicism on the part of many who have worked hard to improve themselves.
3. The governor has given, by her decision, the impression to the public that she believes ex-offenders pose a serious threat to the safety of the community. This disregards the hundreds of ex-offenders who get up every morning and go to work and who also work at being good neighbors in their community.

We, at the New Day Program, are committed to supporting Hartford residents as they prepare to return to their community. We believe we contribute to creating a safer, stronger community by helping ex-offenders become productive members of our community. We hope any changes made by this legislature will recognize the many achievements of those who have successfully used their time on parole and acknowledge the value of a strong parole system.