



**Testimony for November 27, 2007 Hearing of the Judiciary Committee
Regarding *An Act Concerning Home Invasion, Career Criminals, Community Supervision
and Information Sharing Resources, Section 29.***

I am Valarie Shultz-Wilson, President of the Urban League of Southern Connecticut.

I am here to communicate the urgent priority that the Urban League places on effective Reentry work and to support section 29 of *An Act Concerning Home Invasion, Career Criminals, Community Supervision and Information Sharing Resources*. The Urban League firmly believes that the state needs to invest in and expand the reentry work initiated after the Building Bridges Conferences. The key justifications for our recommendation are as follows:

1. **It is our conviction that Reentry work in no way contradicts the high priority that all of us place on public safety**, in fact, effective reentry work **increases** public safety because it improves former offender success and increases post-release scrutiny at the same time.
2. **We believe the State must be mindful of all its objectives, not only public safety.** The murders in Cheshire were deeply tragic, but we all know that the vast majority of offenders are not serious violent offenders. **Youth lost to prison is also a tragedy.** Surely we cannot be complacent about the fact that boys of color from at-risk neighborhoods face a 40% chance of spending time in prison.
3. **The sad statistics on the plight of African American boys and men are intimately connected with massive incarceration rates and the resulting "Catch 22" that makes finding a job and leading a productive life so difficult.**
4. **Effective Reentry work returns desperately needed successful men to their neighborhoods.**
5. **The Urban League is collaborating with Family ReEntry's Fresh Start Reentry Program in Bridgeport.**
6. **We urge the State to fully fund this and all reentry projects, to share the results of successes and plan for expansion.**
7. It would be a serious economic and social mistake to invest in prison building prior to investigating the results of the serious reentry efforts that the state had the great foresight to begin after the Building Bridges initiative. Investing in reentry efforts yields high economic and social returns and should be a high priority. This is a good investment for the state.

**Thank you so much for your time and attention.
November 20, 2007**