



I.P.P.S. Mentoring Program, INC.

Legislative Position

Favorable

SB 157: Employers of Ex-Offenders-Liability-Immunity

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee:

Increasing Personal Power for Success (I.P.P.S.) Mentoring Program is a Maryland Non-Profit IRS 501 C 3 Corporation. Since opening its doors, The I.P.P.S. Mentoring Program has forged strong partnerships with the local business community, media, the local school district, local churches, correctional facilities and other youth/incarcerated-serving organizations in the community.

Formerly incarcerated people need stable jobs for the same reasons as everyone else: to support themselves and their loved ones, pursue life goals, and strengthen their communities. Today, it is reported that 70 million Americans – one in three adults – have a criminal record.¹

While 2.3 million people are imprisoned in the United States, 95 percent of people in state prisons will re-enter our communities at

some point.² More than 640,000 people are released from prisons each year.³

Using a nationally representative dataset, Prison Policy Initiative published the ever estimate of unemployment among the 5 million formerly incarcerated people living in the United States. The unemployment rate of formerly incarcerated people in 2008 (the most recent year for which data are available) was 27.3% (compared to 5.8% in the general public), exceeding even the highest level of unemployment ever recorded in the U.S. (24.9%), during the Great Depression.⁴

I.P.P.S. posits formerly incarcerated people want to work, but face structural barriers to securing employment, particularly within the period immediately following release. For those who are Black or Hispanic – especially women – status as “formerly incarcerated” reduces their employment chances even more. This perpetual labor market punishment creates a counterproductive system of release and poverty, hurting everyone involved: employers, the taxpayers, and certainly formerly incarcerated people looking to break the cycle.

Total Wine & More, a Bethesda, MD based, company for example, provides both GED courses and access to college programs by partnering with the University of Maryland to offer online courses. “When employees see you invest in their future, they grow with the company,” says David Trone, founder of the company.

The fact still remains that hiring new employees is a critically important and costly function for any business. Every hiring decision represents a major investment that employers must make with limited information.

Senate Bill 157 can mitigate liability for employers in specified industries, under certain circumstances, for negligently hiring or failing to adequately supervise an employee that has a criminal background. It is our sense that this legislation represents a viable pathway towards mitigating employer concerns, reduction in existing barriers and increase employment opportunities for those seeking re-entry post incarceration.

For these reasons, Increasing Personal Power for Success (I.P.P.S.) Program respectfully request a **Favorable Report** on **Senate Bill 157**.

Footnotes:

- 1-3. BACK TO BUSINESS HOW HIRING FORMERLY INCARCERATED JOB SEEKERS BENEFITS YOUR COMPANY 2017. A report from the Trone Private Sector and Education Advisory Council to the American Civil Liberties Union
4. Couloute, Lucius, Kopf, Daniel, July 2018. Out of Prison & Out of Work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people