



A PREVENTION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE AGENCY

Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections Committee Testimony

March 5, 2025 9:30 am

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in favor of the Governor's Budget Proposal on Reentry Programs and Services.

My name is Lakiesha Smith, and I serve as the Community Outreach Coordinator for Project LIFT Services. For the past 10 years, I have been deeply engaged in reentry work, supporting returning citizens as they navigate the complex transition back into society.

We know that 32% of individuals released from prison are rearrested within three years. While there are many programs aimed at reentry support, accessibility remains a significant barrier. Too often, returning citizens struggle to connect with services due to a lack of program credibility and negative past interactions. These barriers only reinforce the cycle of recidivism rather than breaking it.

Community-based reentry programs would greatly benefit from a standardized training that equips service providers with the skills to effectively interact with and support returning citizens. Many individuals coming home from incarceration find themselves disoriented, trying to understand a world that has changed in their absence. Without proper support, their chances of successful reintegration diminish.

Through my years in this work, I have witnessed the transformative power of empathy and compassion in service. If we are truly committed to reducing recidivism and fostering safer communities, we must invest in reentry programs that prioritize not just resources, but also relationship-building. Providing comprehensive, well-trained, and accessible support systems is not just an investment in individuals—it is an investment in the stability and safety of our communities as a whole.

I urge this committee to consider the role of properly trained reentry programs in ensuring successful transitions for returning citizens. Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.

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