Dear Connecticut Legislator,

We, the undersigned, write now to support proposals to reduce the use of incarceration in the state’s criminal justice system and to reinvest resources from prison and jail funding into community-driven reentry initiatives and programs. We understand that the State General Assembly will begin the appropriations process during the 2021 legislative session. We recognize that due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the state faces difficult budgetary tradeoffs and decisions. In this context, we urge you to consider the following proposals:

· reduce spending on prisons and the related infrastructure and personnel involved in incarceration. This should not be understood as support for measures that seek to reduce per capita spending in the prison system but rather as support for reducing the number of those incarcerated;

· prioritize investments in communities directly affected by criminal enforcement;

· make detention, when necessary, more humane;

· provide greater educational and employment training to those incarcerated; and

· invest in community-led reentry programs and initiatives.

In this regard, we have reviewed the analysis and recommendations contained in the document “Connecticut at the Crossroads: COVID-19, the State Budget Crisis and the Path Towards Decarceration, Public Safety and Community Investment.” The document is the result of research and analysis by experts at the University Network for Human Rights, based on campus at Wesleyan University in Middletown, and the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders.

We urge you to carefully review the proposals and supporting information and analysis in the document as you decide how best to invest the resources entrusted to you by the people of Connecticut. We, the undersigned, are available to assist you and to provide further information during your work.

With our appreciation and wishes for a successful legislative session.
Signed,

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