

Testimony of Russell Williams – Hartford Connecticut
Before the Labor and Public Employee Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Public Hearing, September 28, 2015

My opposition to Department of Labor proposed closures and consolidations of Job service centers without an Equity Impact Analysis

Good Morning. My name is Russell Williams, a resident of Hartford Connecticut and a former chairperson of the commission on human rights and opportunities coordinating council. I along with commission staff coordinated contract compliance efforts for all agencies in order to create economic development opportunity for small business and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, I am a member of the Hartford NAACP. In addition, I am currently running for President of the Connecticut State Conference of NAACP branches.

I would like to begin by thanking you, Co-Chairs Senator Goames and Representative Tercyak and members of this committee, for holding this hearing. Furthermore, I thank you for your efforts to ensure that we are not balancing the state's budget on the backs of marginalized communities most in need of effective and culturally responsive employment support services which help improve their quality of life; thus moving families towards self-sufficient productive citizens moving out of poverty.

I welcome this opportunity to testify before the Connecticut General Assembly Labor and Public Employees Committee about the proposed Department of Labor Job service center closures and consolidations.

I have concerns regarding the impact of this decision on the potential participants of the newly implemented Second Chance Society law, “a package of initiatives designed to continue the progress being made to reduce Connecticut's crime rate, as well as ensure nonviolent offenders are successfully reintegrated into society and become productive workers in Connecticut's economy.”

http://portal.ct.gov/Departments_and_Agencies/Office_of_the_Governor/Press_Room/Press_Releases/2015/07-2015/Gov_Malloy_Signs_Second_Chance_Society_Bill_to_Further_Reduce_Crime_and_Successfully_Re-Integrate_Nonviolent_Offenders_into_Society/

March 26, 2015 , “In *Projected Decline in Unemployment in 2015 Won't Lift Blacks Out of the Recession-carved Crater*, Economic Policy Institute economist Valerie Wilson finds that black unemployment levels remain higher than pre-recession levels in 28 states(Connecticut being one of them) , even as unemployment rates for whites, Hispanics, and Asians have fallen to just above their pre-recession levels. And while the national white and Hispanic unemployment rates were each within 1 percentage point of their pre-recession levels in the fourth quarter of 2014, the national black unemployment rate was 2.4 percentage points higher than before the recession began.” <http://www.epi.org/press/black-unemployment-is-still-higher-than-pre-recession-levels-in-28-states/>

As a result, I respectfully request that this committee put the brakes on this proposal until an equity impact analysis is conducted to ensure this bill does not disproportionately target communities of color, displaced workers, rural communities , long term unemployed people and other vulnerable populations which include our veterans .