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Connecticut's Historic Investment in reentry promotes healthier communities

By Beth Hines

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People gather at the Community Partners of Action annual reentry resource fair on April 30, 2025 in Hartford. The annual fair brings together local agencies that offer former incarcerated individuals everything from haircuts to health screenings. Photo Courtesy of Community Partners in Action.

When Community Partners in Action was founded in 1875 as the Prisoner's Friends' Society, Connecticut was one of only five states in the nation with an organization dedicated to helping incarcerated individuals prepare for life after prison.

The organization's founding mission was straightforward: promote rehabilitation, assist people returning from incarceration, reduce crime, and strengthen communities. More than 150 years later, those goals remain as relevant as ever.

Over the course of its history, Community Partners in Action has helped shape many of Connecticut's most significant criminal justice reforms. We advocated for the state's

indeterminate sentencing law in 1901, helped establish Connecticut's adult probation system in 1903, supported reforms that led to the creation of a separate prison for women, advanced juvenile justice reforms, and championed community service programs, and diversion initiatives.

Our organization also played a leading role in modernizing Connecticut's correctional system, helping lay the groundwork for the creation of the Connecticut Department of Correction in 1968 and participating in the selection of its first commissioner. In 1978, we launched the nationally recognized Prison Arts Program, and in 1981 partnered with the Connecticut Judicial Branch to create one of the state's first community-based alternatives to incarceration programs.

This year marks another important milestone.

For the first time, Connecticut has provided dedicated state funding for six Reentry Welcome Centers serving Hartford, Waterbury, Bridgeport, New Haven, New Britain, and New London.

The decision reflects a growing recognition that successful reentry is an important component of public safety, workforce development, housing stability, and community well-being.

Community Partners in Action opened the [Greater Hartford Reentry Welcome Center](#) in 2018 through a partnership with then-Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin. In 2021, we opened the Greater Waterbury Reentry Welcome Center. Together, these two centers serve hundreds of individuals annually returning home to nearly 60 cities and towns throughout central Connecticut.

For years, Reentry Welcome Centers operated without dedicated state support. Municipal partners, private foundations, corporations, and individual donors provided the resources necessary to keep services available while providers across Connecticut demonstrated the effectiveness of the model. Community Partners in Action also worked alongside partner organizations to advocate for funding that would support all six Reentry Welcome Centers statewide, helping ensure that services remained available to individuals returning home throughout Connecticut.

The need is clear.

More than 95 percent of incarcerated individuals will eventually return to their communities. Each year, thousands of people leave Connecticut prisons and jails seeking employment,

housing, transportation, healthcare, treatment services, and opportunities to reconnect with family and community.

The [2026 State of Reentry Report](#) found that housing instability, unemployment, behavioral health needs, substance use disorders, transportation barriers, and difficulty obtaining identification remain among the most significant challenges facing individuals returning home from incarceration. Nearly three-quarters of individuals seeking assistance through Connecticut's Reentry Welcome Centers reported unstable housing situations.

Reentry Welcome Centers were created to address those challenges directly.

Staff help individuals obtain identification, connect to housing resources, secure employment, access healthcare and treatment services, enroll in educational programs, and navigate barriers that can stand in the way of a successful transition home.

The impact can be life changing.

Joe Hlavati struggled with addiction, homelessness, and multiple periods of incarceration before connecting with Community Partners in Action's reentry and transitional housing services. Today, he manages one of Connecticut's premier catering and event venues. His story illustrates what can happen when individuals are connected to the resources, support, and opportunities needed to move forward.

The state's investment also represents sound fiscal policy.

Connecticut spends more than \$100,000 annually to incarcerate a single individual. By comparison, the state's approximately \$1.5 million annual investment will support six Reentry Welcome Centers serving communities across Connecticut. Helping thousands of people secure housing, employment, treatment, and stability costs significantly less than repeated incarceration and reduces demands on other public systems, including shelters, emergency services, and healthcare providers.

For Community Partners in Action, this funding represents the continuation of work that began more than a century and a half ago. Just as our organization helped establish probation, advance juvenile justice reforms, support the creation of the Department of Correction, and pioneer alternatives to incarceration, Reentry Welcome Centers represent another practical innovation designed to improve outcomes, strengthen communities, and make effective use of public resources.

We are grateful to the legislators, state leaders, community partners, donors, and advocates who helped make this investment possible. We are especially grateful to the supporters whose generosity sustained these centers long before state funding existed and who stood with us as we worked to demonstrate their value.

Connecticut's decision to fund Reentry Welcome Centers is not simply an investment in six programs. It is an investment in a proven approach that helps people return home successfully, strengthens communities, and makes wise use of taxpayer dollars.

After 151 years of advancing practical solutions to complex challenges, Community Partners in Action is proud to help write this next chapter in Connecticut's history.

Beth Hines is the executive director of Community Partners in Action.