



Letter in Support of Int. No. 2047-2020

Date: 09/17/2020

NYC Council Committee on Civil and Human Rights:

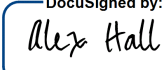
As the Housing Associate at the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI), and I am writing this letter in support of Int. No. 2047-2020, a Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to prohibiting housing discrimination on the basis of arrest or criminal record.

I assist BPI students and alumni secure housing as they return to their communities. In my work, I am constantly confronted with the discrimination Int. 2047-2020 would eliminate. Housing is difficult enough in NYC without this additional barrier for justice impacted people. Financial, credit, and tax histories pose challenges for so many prospective tenants, but are amplified for formerly incarcerated people who have not had the ability to participate in these systems. When you add criminal backgrounds to this problem, it's nearly insurmountable. And the problem is not only with private landlords, criminal background checks also preclude entrance to NYCHA and other affordable housing projects that could act as an effective housing resource for men and women returning to NYC.

Many people assume incorrectly that the root of the housing challenges for formerly incarcerated people stem from a lack of employment. To the contrary, over 85% of BPI alumni obtain substantive employment within 60 days of returning to their communities. They gain employment in diverse industries across the public and private sectors, including recycling, the NYC Department of Health, non-profits, and the NYC Board of Education. Yet even BPI alumni face extreme challenges obtaining permanent housing because of discrimination on the basis of justice involvement.

We write in support of this bill because we believe that housing is a fundamental human right. It is as important to the success of our students and alumni community as nearly any other variable during their transitions out of prison. We believe this bill would be a powerful tool in helping us successfully support reentry.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Alex Hall

Housing Associate