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Norwich City Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Norwich, Connecticut. Supporters of the "Beyond the Box" initiative will hold a press conference at Norwich City Hall on December 1, 2008 at 4:30pm on the Second Floor.

The press conference will be held just hours before the Norwich City Council will consider an ordinance that would make Norwich the first community in Connecticut to reform its municipal job application process. The ordinance would ensure that applicants with criminal records are given an opportunity to discuss their qualifications and histories before the city makes hiring decisions.

Supporters from throughout the State have been invited to speak and explain why this initiative is so important to the economic wellbeing of Connecticut's urban centers and the people who live there. "This ordinance will require that the city conducts criminal background checks before anyone is offered a job with the city, but it will also require hiring officials to listen to all applicants before jumping to conclusions based on just one part of an application," said Alderman Bob Zarnetske..

The proposed ordinance would eliminate the check box on city job applications that requires applicants to respond to the question "Have you ever been arrested?" The ordinance would require a newly-designed job application form that would replace the box with a prominent notice to applicants that they will have to provide that criminal history information if they become finalists for the position being sought.

The public will be allowed to weigh in on the proposed ordinance at the public hearing, which will begin at 7:30 on December 1, 2008 right before the council meeting.

Former Alderwoman Jacqueline Caron, founder and chief executive officer of the Connecticut Pardon Team, and officials from other advocacy programs brought the issue to the City Council earlier this fall. The representatives argued that the biggest obstacle released convicts face is finding employment. Caron told the council Monday that 75 percent of released convicts still do not have a job one year after having been released.

Alderman Bob Zarnetske authored the proposed ordinance sponsored by Zarnetske, Alderman Mark Bettencourt and Alderman Christopher Coutu.