



CITY OF BUFFALO

Executive Order #16-01

MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

DIRECTING THE ADOPTION OF “RETURNING CITIZEN” IN PLACE OF “EX-OFFENDER” AS A CITY WIDE REINTEGRATION POLICY

By the authority vested in me by the Laws of the State of New York and Sections 2-3 and 2-4 of the Charter of the City of Buffalo, it is hereby ordered as follows:

WHEREAS, each year hundreds of citizens are released from federal, state and local correctional facilities and return to Buffalo, New York. Most of these individuals return to our community with educational deficits, in need of additional training, skills development in order to be ready, and able to work. Along with having the challenge of having a criminal record, successful reintegration into our community is hampered by these deficiencies and often important resources and opportunities are denied to them; and

WHEREAS, the commonly-used term “ex-offender” potentially contributes to the stigma suffered by these individuals as a result of their past, while the term “Returning Citizen” more appropriately focuses on the fact that they are engaged in the process of reintegration. Because it has been the longstanding policy of the City to help residents overcome adversity and thereby foster reintegration, the term, “Returning Citizens” is preferable; and

WHEREAS, the inability of returning citizens to obtain the skills and training that they need in order to secure employment, and thus become productive citizens, resulting in high recidivism rates, which equates to a decrease in community safety, increased instability in their own personal lives, and an increase in city expenditures for various city services, particularly police services; and

WHEREAS, obtaining meaningful employment is often the most critical step towards reducing the chances of returning to prison among Returning Citizens, and that the City of Buffalo has

demonstrated the importance of this by passing the “Ban the Box” law which prohibit employers from inquiring into the criminal history of applicants on initial employment applications. This law was passed to eliminate the possibility of job candidates, who are Returning Citizens, from being automatically disqualified from further consideration based on a prior criminal history. Instead, the law encourages employers to consider the applicant’s qualifications first and then, subsequently make individualized inquiries into any criminal conviction to determine whether it is relevant to the job sought or to public safety.

WHEREAS, to help reduce prison costs and to proactively ensure that everyone in the City of Buffalo has an equal opportunity to succeed, it is necessary that “Returning Citizens” be provided opportunities and advocacy to obtain skills and apply for meaningful employment to successfully reintegrate back into our community;

NOW, THEREFORE, It is so ordered:

1. That it shall be the policy of the City of Buffalo to use the term “Returning Citizen” on any official or unofficial communication, document, data set, listing or other description or written material to describe these individuals, and the term “ex-offender” shall not be used any longer for such purpose. As noted, a “Returning Citizen” is an individual who has recently been released from a federal, state or local correctional facility, or a person who was not recently incarcerated but who has a criminal record or history.
2. Be it further ordered that it shall also be the policy of the City to rename the Buffalo Employment & Training Center’s (BETC) Re-Entry Program the “**Re-Integration Services to Employment (R.I.S.E.)**” Program to potentially reduce the stigma which may increase the challenges these citizens face. Like the term ‘Returning Citizen’, R.I.S.E. more appropriately focuses on the individual successes and growth as a result of the participation in the process of reintegration. However the mission of R.I.S.E will remain the preparation of “Returning Citizens” for the job search process and to equip them with life skills through vocational and technical workshops beneficial to securing gainful employment, as is consistent with the overall mission of BETC. Additionally, it will be the responsibility of the BETC to consolidate all efforts currently existing in City government, as well as to educate employers of benefits provided by the State of New York for businesses that hire Returning Citizens.
3. Be it finally ordered that the Office of the Mayor, and its subsidiaries, will work collaboratively with the Buffalo Common Council to enact legislation embracing the term “Returning citizen” by using it to replace the currently used term “ex-offender” within the City Charter, including the introduction of a resolution allowing the public an opportunity to give input on the term replacement.

This Order is not intended to, and does not, create a right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable, at law or in equity by any party against the City of Buffalo, its departments, agencies, officers, employees, or agents.

GIVEN, under my hand and the Privy Seal of the City of Buffalo in the State of New York, this 11th day of January, in the year 2017.

City of Buffalo

Mayor Byron W. Brown