

Taking Action on an Issue that Matters

Donna K. Dear

I am very active in my community – Roxbury, Massachusetts. I volunteer at Rosie’s Place where I help serve lunch to the homeless, and I am active with the T Riders’ Union, which organizes for transportation justice. Being involved with a community of people who care about the issues



Donna Dear at a rally at the State House in Boston.

has helped me to fight for things that matter to me. Also, I have an 18-year-old nephew. He is a good kid, but there are so many dangers out there. I want him to have a supportive environment as he becomes an adult.

One issue that matters to me and my community is CORI reform. Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) files are damaging people’s lives. CORI files provide lists of convictions and arrests (even if the arrest did not result in a conviction). Even misdemeanors stay on your record indefinitely. CORI laws keep thousands

of people from obtaining employment, housing, loans, insurance, and college education. More than two and a half million people living in Massachusetts have a CORI.

As a CORI reform activist, I have distributed literature about CORI reform, encouraged my neighbors to get involved, and attended public hearings. We had a march that started in Roxbury and went all the way to the State House, where people with CORIs spoke and we delivered letters and petitions.

There is a dire need for our state representatives to support CORI reform, which would outlaw no-CORI hiring policies and reduce the number of years one must wait to seal a record from the public’s view. It is unjust for people to go to jail, serve their time, and come back into society with no possibility of getting a job. As one Baptist minister testified at the September 18th, 2007 public hearing: “Our commonwealth should treat people like human beings.” If that’s not enough of a reason to support CORI reform, consider that it costs over \$40,000 to lock someone up for a year. It is better for communities and the budget, to have people employed.



I will continue to fight for CORI reform by organizing in my community, attending rallies and public hearings, and petitioning my state representatives. Find out what the CORI laws are in your state. Take action now and help prevent CORI from ruining promising lives.

Think about it!

Donna Dear says she hopes her nephew will have “a more supportive environment as he becomes an adult.” What is she doing to support him?

Sources: Yawu Miller, 9-27-07, *The Boston Banner*; <www.unionofminorityneighborhoods.org>; and “Fighting for jobs and CORI Reform,” 6-2-07, *Boston Workers Alliance newsletter*.

Donna K. Dear, originally from Barbados, is not eligible to vote due to her citizenship status, but she has found many ways to make her voice heard. She is enrolled in a College Pathways class conducted by ABCD in Boston, MA.