

**Testimony before the Judiciary Committee**  
**Raised Bill #5781, LCO #3003**  
**An Act Concerning Certificates of Employability and Rehabilitation**  
**March 13, 2006**

Good afternoon, Chairman MacDonald, Chairman Lawlor, and members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here to speak against **Raised Bill #5781, An Act Concerning Certificates of Employability and Rehabilitation**.

My name is Jazmin Molina and I am a graduate student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. Although I am testifying as a student, I also currently work as a certified alcohol and drug abuse counselor for the Department of Correction and know of the difficulties that many ex-offenders have of reintegrating into society after they have completed their prison time.

Currently, many ex-offenders are denied public housing, financial aid to go to college, the ability to build credit, and employment because of their criminal background. Family members of convicted felons are also denied public housing if that person still lives with them. Those ex-offenders that are in recovery from drug and/or alcohol abuse still find that, despite staying sober and attempting to reintegrate back into the community, they have little social and economic stability in their lives. They do not have substantial opportunities to find adequate housing, employment, and education in order to improve their quality of life.

I ask you to oppose **Raised Bill #5781, An Act Concerning Certificates of Employability and Rehabilitation**. The first half of the bill states that a person who has been convicted of a crime and who is a resident of Connecticut may apply for a certificate of employability. The person would apply to the Superior Court if he/she served a sentence of less than two years. If the person's sentence was longer than two years, he/she would apply to the Board of Pardons. This certificate can be issued while the person is still serving their sentence. The second half of the bill creates a provisional pardon, and a certificate of rehabilitation.

This bill was created in the spirit of helping ex-offenders gain employment by providing a certificate that is meant to enhance your credibility and vouch for your good character. However, neither the certificate of employability nor the provisional pardon is an absolute pardon, nor does either part of the bill ensure the erasure of criminal records. This bill is not intended to streamline the pardon process and provide a "clean slate" for those who are granted a pardon. Any certificate given can still be perceived as a scarlet letter informing prospective employers of an individual's criminal history. Also, these certificates do not apply to public and federal programs and other issues such as housing, financial aid, and building credit.

**An Act Concerning Certificates of Employability and Rehabilitation** becomes a hindrance in allowing ex-offenders to successfully transition back into their communities. It will not allow them access to find housing for themselves and their families. It will not assist those that want to attend college with the financial aid that they may need. This bill will not permit people to build the credit necessary to buy a home or car. It may not successfully offer people the opportunity to establish a career. But, most importantly, this bill will not give people the opportunity to start over. Instead, ex-offenders will continue to pay for a crime that they have already served time

for. I urge our legislators to seek other alternatives in order to remove the stigma associated with a felony conviction.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I sincerely hope that the committee votes against **Raised Bill #5781**, not only in the best interest of the convicted felons applying for pardons, but also in the best interest of the communities in which they are integral members of. Thank you for your time.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.