

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

Good morning members of the Judiciary Committee, statesmen, ladies and gentlemen. My name is LaResse Harvey from Create Change, a Connecticut grassroots community organization. I am here to testify against Raised Bill No. 5781, An Act Concerning the Certificates of Employability and Rehabilitation.

As a human being who made a mistake, I do not believe I should have to expose myself further with another title or stigmatism. What you are attempting to do is another opportunity for society to reject people like me. I have paid the penalties for my mistake according to your laws and now I want to be acknowledged again as a human being. I need and deserve the same rights as any other human being. Your constant labeling continues to separate me from the rest of society.

Society says, if you do the crime, you do the time. What society doesn't say is after you are released no matter how much you've rehabilitated, no matter how your character has changed, no matter what your improvements...we still won't accept you. Furthermore, if you want to live with your family, we won't accept them either. Is this JUSTICE? I think not! Is this what we have come to accept as civil conduct? God Forbid! Yet Bill No. 5781 again causes for further rejection and does not by any means help with shelter, food, and clothing. It only further hinders a person from obtaining employment.

I am now 33 years old, the mother of two children, that for over a year after being laid off was unable to find employment. Why? All because of a felony charge. It had nothing to do with my educational background, nor my experience. The only reason why I was not hired for more than 10 different positions is because they saw me as an ex-offender. I have 3 Associate degrees and I am working on my BA. I have over ten years of computer experience, 6 years customer service and almost 2 years counseling and social service experiences. I interviewed well, on several occasions and was hired on the spot, only to be told ten minutes later that due to my felony charge they could not hire me. Yes, I am employed now because they did not ask about my criminal record. They hired me based on my character, experience and education. For once I was looked at as a human being and remained a human being. To this company I will

always be grateful and a dedicated employee. Not because they were the first ones to hire me, but because they were the ones who saw me as a HUMAN BEING.

When you have a record you no longer have rights. You don't even have one of the three basic human rights: The RIGHT TO SHELTER. Raised Bill No. 5781 does not reinforce any practical means of reintegration. Instead, these certificates leave me in a situation where I must constantly admit guilt for my mistake, incarceration, parole, and probation as if LaResse Harvey was only the result of a mistake. This legislation also proposes that I go up to the Board of Pardons and have them decide if I can be trusted for employment. Why do that when I can just apply for a pardon? Why go through the process of inspecting my character for a certificate when I can get a PARDON? A pardon would allow me to be HUMAN. To be employed without the need of a certificate. To feed my family, clothe my family and own my own business. Bill 5781 does not offer me any of these things. It just DEHUMANIZES people. It is sad that I have to stand before you and say, "I am HUMAN".

Jesus says in John 17: 19 "And so for their sake and on their behalf I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in the Truth." The truth is I am not an ex-offender. I am not a criminal. Nor am I an inmate. I am a HUMAN BEING, who made a mistake.

LaResse Harvey