



*Office of Chief Public Defender
State of Connecticut*

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**Testimony of
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**R.B. No. 170-An Act Concerning Pardons
R.B. No. 1029-An Act Concerning Pardon Applications
R.B. No. 1030-An Act Providing Technical Assistance to Persons Seeking Pardons**

**Judiciary Public Hearing
March 12, 2007**

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports passage of these three bills: **Raised Bill No. 1030 - *An Act Providing Technical Assistance to Persons Seeking Pardons***; **Raised Bill No. 1029 - *An Act Concerning Pardon Applications***; and, **Raised Bill No. 170 - *An Act Concerning Pardons***.

Raised Bill No. 1030 - *An Act Providing Technical Assistance to Persons Seeking Pardons*: This bill would require the board of Pardons and Paroles to contract with an entity that would provide assistance in the pardon process to Connecticut residents who have not been convicted of a criminal offense for a minimum period of five years and who have successfully completed probation or parole. Having assistance in the pardon process would benefit those who might otherwise be overwhelmed or not have the ability to navigate through the process.

The Office of Chief Public Defender believes that this bill would also assist in removing collateral consequences that have impacted upon Veterans as a result of convictions for violations. As a participant in the Annual Stand Down, held at the Veteran's Hospital in Rocky Hill, the Division of Public Defender Services has provided legal assistance to veterans in numerous criminal cases involving violations and minor misdemeanors. What is apparent is that the existence of a conviction for a violation can impact on the

veteran's ability to obtain a license and employment. Providing assistance, as this bill contemplates, will permit a veteran the opportunity to pursue a pardon and positively impact upon his/her life.

Raised Bill No. 1029 - *An Act Concerning Pardons:* Current law authorizes the Board of Pardons and Parole to grant a pardon to persons convicted of a misdemeanor or felony. The bill, as drafted, would permit the Board of Pardons and Paroles the authority to grant a pardon to a person who has been convicted of a violation. A violation is defined as "[A]n offense, for which the only sentence authorized is a fine, unless expressly designated an infraction." *C.G.S. §53a-27-Violation: Definition, designation.* The granting of such authority is logical since the Board already has the authority to grant a pardon in regard to higher classifications of offenses.

Raised Bill No. 170 - *An Act Concerning Pardon Applications:* This bill provides discretion to the Board of Pardons and Paroles to "accept" a pardon application if made by a person three years after a misdemeanor conviction and five years after a felony conviction. In "extraordinary circumstances" the Board would also be permitted to "accept" an application for a pardon. This grant of discretion to accept such applications could result in the Board granting a pardon in an appropriate case where a person is rehabilitated and contributes to society.