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**Testimony before the Judiciary Committee
Monday, April 9th, 2007
1.00 pm in Room 2C of the LOB**

Good afternoon, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Frank Sykes and I am the Legislative Analyst with the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC). The Commission is a state legislative agency charged with influencing policy and legislation impacting the status of African-Americans in the state and we are hear today to speak in support of

SB –186 An act concerning the release and sale of conviction information after a pardon is granted, the restoration of an operator’s license and the issuance of a special operator’s permit.

This Commission has strongly supported post incarceration initiatives aimed at enhancing the welfare of ex-inmates. The bill we speak in favor of today is no

different. It seeks to ensure that the records of ex-inmates pertaining to pardons granted and their criminal history are in compliance with the records of all the reporting agencies and entities that maintain such records in the state. It has come to the Commission's attention that certain inmates potentially run the risk of losing employment simply because information regarding a pardon previously granted has not been updated when it should have. As such there are inconsistencies and errors in the way this information is reported. Nationally close to 700,000 prisoners are released.¹ Here in Connecticut anywhere from 10,000 to 11,000 are released annually.² Once ex-offenders are released, they face numerous challenges transitioning into the community and the single most daunting obstacle towards this re-integration, is securing employment. Over half leave correctional facilities without a high diploma. Consequently their chances of gaining employment are already limited and will depend a lot on how efficiently the system manages their re-integration efforts.

Research tells us that the first three months after release are critical in determining whether an individual stays out of the prison system or is re-arrested. Recidivism studies conducted by Program Review and Investigation further confirm that re-arrest rates tend to be higher for African-Americans and Hispanics, simply because many don't receive the support they need to make a successful transition. This bill seeks to make technical changes to improve the chances of ex-offenders seeking employment. Accordingly the Commission is fully supportive of this measure and urges the passage of the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

¹ America Works In the News; *Can Recidivism Reform Do For Men What Welfare Reform Did For Women?*

² Connecticut Department of Corrections, *Sentenced Inmates Incarcerated in Discharged to EOS or Community between Count by Inmate 01/01/06-10/25/06*