



**AFRICAN-AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION  
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**Testimony before the Judiciary Committee  
Monday March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
2.00 pm in Room 2E of the LOB**

Good afternoon, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Frank Sykes the Legislative Analyst with the African-American Affairs Commission. The Commission is a state legislative agency charged with influencing policy and legislation impacting the status of African-Americans in the state. Today the Commission testifies in support of the followings bills:

***Committee Bill 1030 – An act providing technical assistance to persons seeking pardons.***

Nationally close to 700,000 prisoners are released annually.<sup>1</sup> Here in Connecticut anywhere from 10,000 to 11,000 are released.<sup>2</sup> African-Americans make up roughly 43 percent of Connecticut's prison population, and comprise the majority of ex-offenders released. Ex-offenders face numerous challenges transitioning into the society, but the single most daunting obstacle towards re-integration is securing employment. 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 support comes in many ways. It could simply mean explaining the technical terms on a form to ex-offenders in applying for a pardon. A pardon is important for what it does symbolically. It recognizes a persons good conduct and rehabilitates that persons reputation, hence improving their employment status. Unfortunately the process can be complicated and discouraging for many. The Commission believes that those who deserve a pardon must receive it and technical assistance must be available for anyone who applies for a pardon. For these reasons the Commission supports the aforementioned bills and urges passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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

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