

Judiciary Committee

Public Hearing

March 12, 2007

Testimony relating to Senate Bill 1030: ***AN ACT PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS SEEKING PARDONS.***

This bill would require the Board of Pardons and Paroles to contract for a program that provides technical assistance for persons desiring to go through the pardons process to residents who were convicted of a crime, have successfully completed their probation or parole and have not been convicted of a crime for at least five years.

There is a great need for a program like this – when I applied for my pardon in 2000, it was with great anticipation of major changes in my life. I had come through some pretty hard times, and was making significant changes in my life.

I had become a community advocate – seeking to help others through my experience and my knowledge – and I was shopping one day when I ran into my former Public Defender, Attorney Linda Sullivan. She had followed my activities, and suggested that I would make a good candidate for the Pardon process.

I began the process with high hopes, but soon ran into reality. The old system had no one to help me work through the application or the process. I was flying blind – trying to make sense of an application that seemed to require an advanced degree to understand it, and dealing with an office that had limited staff and not very helpful staff at that.

I eventually received my pardon after many weeks of hard work, and asked another community-minded individual – my friend Dianne Daniels – “How many other people need help with this information and with the process?” From that simple question the idea of the Connecticut Pardon Team was born.

We began holding open informational forums in 2004 to spread the word about the process of applying for a non-inmate pardon. Though the application was made available online, there was no formal process for providing assistance with completing the application, the information retrieval process for criminal records, or in writing the personal statement which is the linchpin of the pardon application.

Our first forums included people not only from our home town of Norwich, but from many other communities within Connecticut, and even residents of

Massachusetts, New York, and other states. All of these people had some things in common:

1. They had all been convicted of a crime
2. They had all successfully served their sentence, plus any parole or probation
3. They were all conviction-free for at least 5 years
4. The majority of them were giving back to their communities through volunteer or community service
5. They all wanted to clear their criminal records so they could move forward with their lives.

In early 2006, we made the decision to apply for 501(c)3 non-profit status, and were successful in receiving that designation in October 2006. We have received requests for our informational forums and our Pardon Assistance Program from communities all over the state of Connecticut. To all those legislators and senators who have requested our presence in their community – we will schedule forums in your areas as soon as we are able.

We know that there is a great need among Connecticut residents for this program – a recent forum in Waterbury had 150 pre-registered participants, and we anticipated that as many as 200 people might show up for the informational. Imagine our surprise and shock when nearly 500 people showed up for the forum – in the rain, and with no guarantee that they would find what they needed. The possibility was all they needed to bring them out to get the information and tools that might help change their lives.

I cannot tell you in strong enough terms how needed this program is – there are so many people who need this help – who need to know that if they live good lives, give back to their community, and work hard, that they can better their lives and the lives of their families.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 1030 so that people across the state of Connecticut can be provided with the technical assistance, information and tools they need to help change their lives.

Thank you for your time,

Jacqueline Caron, Founder  
Connecticut Pardon Team, Inc.