

March 12, 2007

Good afternoon,

My name is Gwendolyn Bawl and I am here before you because I believe that Bill number 1030 (An Act Providing Technical Assistance to Persons Seeking Pardons) will be beneficial to the State of Connecticut. I would like to take a moment to share my experience of seeking a pardon. In 1991, I had come to the end of my road with the life and behaviors of committing crimes, breaking rules, and involvement with drugs. What I wanted was to live a normal life. I realize that not only was I hurting myself, I was hurting others; friends and family included. Believe it or not, I began to think about a desire that I had as a child. I wanted to live saved life. I wanted to be a God fearing woman. I wanted to be able to feel good about myself and carry myself in a respectable manner. I began going to church. I got involved, I prayed, I attend Bible study, I have joined the Choir and I found joy. I was happy with life and my newfound friends. I was working everyday to support family, and myself and dealing with life's difficulties. Even though my life had changed completely and I am now a law abiding citizen, (and have been for a long time), from time to time, I would have to explain my past police record either when applying for a job or housing. In addition, one day someone suggested that I apply for a pardon. It had been ten years since I had any problems with the law. In 2000, I completed the process of applying for a pardon and I was denied. The second time I applied, it was 2006 and again I was denied. I was told I would have to wait until 2009 before I can apply again. I am a fifty-year-old mother and grandmother who continues to do the right thing with steady employment, and an honest living. I am involved with a church that is committed to being of service to our community. I have shared my recovery story with many people and I have been told that my turn around has inspired them. Bill number 1030 can help people like me who are attempting to be an asset to the community, understand the necessity of being a positive role model to people who have chosen a negative path. I think that people who have overcome negative pasts have a lot to share. When I went on the Pardon Board's website, it encourages people to apply by stating that after successful completion of parole or probation, remaining conviction free for at least five years, taking positive action to rehabilitate themselves, and setting an exceptional example for other convicted persons, should be qualified for a pardon. It has been seven years since my first request of pardon and being denied two consecutive times by the Board of Pardon puzzles me. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn Bawl