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Good Afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. I come before you today to testify in support of several bills regarding the pardon process as well as one bill concerning the process in capital felony trials.

There are three bills on the agenda today which would facilitate the pardon process for those deserving and seeking pardons. The pardon process is a logical and compassionate action by the state for those offenders who have in fact rehabilitated themselves but are restrained in their ability to move forward with their lives because of a conviction in their past. It is appropriate in cases where the Department of Correction has lived up to its name and assisted

offenders in becoming productive citizens. In recent years we have taken meaningful steps to make the pardon process more accessible. These steps have worked very well and I hope we can do even more this year. The new chairman of the Board of Pardons and Paroles, former state representative Robert Farr, has expressed the goals very well: "The issuance of a pardon by the Board is an extraordinary act of grace which finalizes the transition of an offender into the community by expunging all or a portion of that person's criminal history from the record. This, in turn, may remove certain civil disabilities or restrictions connected with the original offense and allow the former offender to pursue expanded opportunities for a more productive and fulfilling life." The need to assist ex-offenders with re-entry is of extraordinary importance not only to the offender but also to our society.

First, I want to offer my support for SB 170, An Act Concerning Pardons, which clarifies the jurisdiction of the Board of Pardons and Paroles and makes clear that the Board has the authority to grant pardons to persons convicted of violations that can result in incarceration. This is a commonsense addition to our law regarding pardons and, in fact, I received some positive input on this proposal from U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Judge and former Yale Law School Dean Guido Calabresi who, as we all know, supports compassion in the law. This bill would allow those convicted of violations the opportunity to overcome

their history in the same manner as those convicted of felonies and misdemeanors.

Second, and in a similar vein, I support SB 1029, An Act Concerning Pardon Applications. While our statutes give the Board extraordinarily broad discretion with regard to the granting of pardons, sometimes the Board has set policies that needlessly prevent entirely rehabilitated persons from moving forward with their lives. This bill would make it clear that the Board may grant a pardon three years after an applicant's conviction for a misdemeanor and five years after an applicant's conviction for a felony. The Board would retain discretion to grant pardons earlier in extraordinary circumstances.

These two bills would assist deserving citizens who have taken positive action to successfully rehabilitate themselves and have given back to the community. Please be clear, none of this legislation would require the Board to grant pardons to anyone not determined to be deserving. These bills demonstrate common sense and compassion; they assist both the rehabilitated ex-offenders and the society.

In addition, I support SB 1030, An Act Providing Technical Assistance to Persons Seeking Pardons which would require the Board of Pardons and Paroles to contract to provide workshops and programs to help qualified persons with the pardon process. The pardon process consists of a number of steps and

requires painstaking attention to detail; for some rehabilitated ex-offenders this can be daunting. Providing these persons with technical assistance is simply the right thing to do.

Finally, I would like to offer my support for HB 7365, An Act Concerning the Procedure in A Capital Felony Trial. This is sensible legislation which would impose a sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of release in the event that the jury in a capital felony trial is deadlocked with regard to whether a sentence of death or life imprisonment without the possibility of release should be imposed. If there is any doubt as to the wisdom of imposing the death penalty in a particular case it should not be imposed. If a person is put to death in error, there, of course, is no way to remedy that mistake.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of these four bills of extraordinary merit. Each one would create a more sensible justice system for our state.