MEMO TO: Public Safety and Security Commission, State of Connecticut
Public Hearing – Tuesday March 2, 2010 February Session 2010
Senate Chair- Senator Andrea Stillman
House Chair- Representative Stephen Dargan

I am submitting Public Testimony on behalf of ***H.B. 196, An Act Concerning The Collection of Delinquent Taxes And Lottery Winnings.***

My name is Anthony Martino. I am a Support Enforcement Officer with the Judicial Department at the Stamford Courthouse. Several years ago I made a suggestion to pursue balances owed by Child Support Obligors by intercepting lottery winnings. I proposed that idea to my State Representative John Wayne Fox (D-144) of Stamford. He drafted a bill that year that ultimately did not get heard. The next year we began again, and it gained momentum. I submitted public testimony at that time. Eventually, after what I think was the third attempt, the Department of Social Services joined in the effort. Ultimately, after several years, this bill was passed. It mandated that the Lottery Commission was to interface with the Department of Social Services. The intent being to check lottery winners against a database that included obligors with balances in their child support account.

While it is impossible to check all winners of any ticket, a policy was drafted to seek out those people with winnings of $5000.00(five thousand) or more. The Lottery Commission will cash smaller winnings at any lottery dealer; and it will cash winning tickets ranging from $600 to 4999 at one of three stations in the State. *However*, all winning tickets of $5000 or more *must* be cashed at the Lottery Headquarters. These are the winners that are checked against a database of obligors owing child support.

Several years ago I contacted Representative Jim Shapiro(D-144), suggesting that the State of Connecticut could apply the same process to those owing delinquent taxes. The concept could be further extended to casino winnings. I believe that this same procedure of interfacing a database of tax delinquencies against holders of winning lottery tickets could be installed. While privacy issues would of course be considered, there could be some sort of mandated communication between the agencies that would allow interception of proceeds to be applied to the tax delinquencies that may exist for that particular winner.

So far the lottery intercept program has been very successful in the child support division. All intercepted obligors are given the opportunity to have a Fair Hearing. In fact, many have been pleased to finally clear a balance.
I am not certain of the total amount collected over these past several years, but at the outset, my contact at the Department of Social Services told me that it had collected $600,000(six hundred thousand) during the first 4 months of the program.

I feel this would be a winner for the State of Connecticut, and its residents. The State would only be collecting what it is fairly due, delinquent taxes. It would be hard to argue with that.
I look forward to being of any assistance that I can in furthering this bill. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Anthony Martino
Stamford, CT
203-965-5706 office