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RE: Raised Bill No. 5553 "An Act Concerning Substance Abuse Programs"

Mr. Chairman,

My testimony today endorses the Bill that is before you: I would like to make a particular plea regarding Sections 3 & 4, the reinstatement of the multiple offender drunken driving program, also known as 14-227f of the general statutes, which was repealed as of 12/31/2011.

I support the reinstatement of the multiple offender program because I have witnessed its benefit to many over a significant period of time. As a licensed professional, I have had the privilege of working with many clients in this program and can attest to its effectiveness in changing the lives of so many of its participants. The feedback that we have received over the years has been overwhelmingly positive with expressions of gratitude.

Being arrested for driving under the influences is often indicative of a problem beyond a lack of judgment. The multiple offender program allowed the participants to be evaluated by professional staff with the necessary recommendations being made. It also gave the participants the opportunity for self assessment. They were given information and the necessary tools in an environment that allowed for focused self reflection.

Chronic alcohol abusers were able to receive the help needed to become productive citizens with decreased risk of reoffending. Assessment was only part of the program. Substance abuse education and a very thorough introduction to the process necessary to make substantive changes in ones life was also provided. When indicated, referrals for professional treatment were made.

In many instances a substance abuse evaluation revealed that the client was under the influence of a substance other than alcohol at the time of their arrest. Installing a breathalyzer in the vehicle would not address the possible use of other substances while operating an automobile.

Informed participants make better decisions for themselves which will have a positive effect on society as a whole. I believe the risks of reoffending are greatly reduced with proper assessment, education and professional treatment if indicated.

For the 20,000 repeat offenders who are being pardoned, I do not condone rewarding citizens for not following through on the mandates of the law at the time of their arrests. I believe they should minimally be assessed for their level of risk of reoffending as well as given the information and tools that would increase their chances of not reoffending. To require less would be an injustice to the offender and to society as well.

Thank you for your consideration,



Charlotte Abrams