

A Happy Life

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Testimony of Onyeka Obiocha

IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 23 AN ACT CONCERNING BENEFIT CORPORATIONS AND ENCOURAGING  
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Before the Joint Committee on Commerce

February 27, 2014

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude for allowing me to speak here today. My name is Onyeka Obiocha, and I am a proud resident of Windsor, Connecticut. I sit here before you to express my unwavering support for S.B 23 An Act Concerning Benefit Corporations and Encouraging Social Enterprises. In order to fully understand the importance this bill has on my life, I would like to start by telling you a little bit about myself.

Six years before I was born, my parents emigrated from Nigeria to the United States, landing in suburban Windsor, Connecticut. My childhood could easily be considered average, backyard basketball and cartoons took up all my free time. This was until in the year 2000, when, as a narrow minded ten year old, my father brought my siblings and I to live in Nigeria for a year.

I initially thought of my time in Nigeria as a sabbatical – a chance to break from the monotonous routine of life in the US and dive into something completely new and exciting. I quickly realized I would learn more here than I ever could have dreamed. I learned about malaria,

homelessness, lack of clean water. The suffering was palpable, but so was the hope, the faith in community. The implicit knowledge that if only given the opportunity one could break this cycle of poverty.

Upon returning to Windsor, I re-focused my efforts on helping my community, whether through student government, leadership conferences, or sports. I wanted to interact with and learn from a diverse body of people, to gain a better understanding of the world and formulate effective business solutions to the problems it faced.

This path has brought me to where I am today. The Chief Operating Officer of A Happy Life, a soon to be social enterprise that invests 100% of our profits to help growers in underserved countries break the cycle of poverty and live happier lives. By selling specialty grade, organic coffee we aim to make the world a little happier, one cup at a time. This legislation will allow A Happy Life to secure our social mission into the very fabric of our company without the fear of losing this central tenet to a merger or acquisition. S.B 23 will empower a new generation of entrepreneurs to hold purpose above profit, to utilize their business acumen to create change, and transform Connecticut into a hub of social entrepreneurship. Ultimately, this legislation will open the door for us and others to make a difference from Norwalk to Nigeria.

Thank you for your time and consideration.