

As a concerned citizen I am testifying regarding raised bills Nos. 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 15.

I agree that some changes are needed in the criminal justice system but I feel that many of the proposed changes are based on knee jerk emotional reactions as opposed to intelligent decisions based on reason. The emotional reactions of the vocal minority are asking that all convicted persons be punished for the behaviors of a few. Remember when in grade school the entire class was punished because a small number of students misbehaved? When this happened and you were not part of the cause, how did you feel about what was happening to you and to your friends? As stated in the editorial "Sexual Abuse Hysteria" in the Hartford Courant on 9/25/05 "Much of the push for harsher laws is driven by a handful of notorious cases..." Only the most gut-wrenching stories reach the general public creating the belief that all criminals are bad people and will re-offend. Every one of us is a potential criminal and though this statement feels awful none of us knows what we might be capable of and it only takes a few seconds to snap.

First I'd like to address Raised Bill No.12 section 2 beginning with line 10.

On line 15 the term "any other supervised release program" frightens me. This appears to be a reaction to the gentleman who was recently released to the home of his sister in Southbury as a way to keep inmates incarcerated indefinitely. (We often hear and speak of family values, this family demonstrates true family values.) Once an inmate has finished his / her given sentence he / she should be released. Requiring a psychiatric examination of inmates before being granted parole is reasonable as parole is not a right. Being released at the end of one's sentence is a right.

The question this psychiatric examination poses for me is who would be administering the exam. The assurance that the exam administrator would be an independent 3rd party who is not involved with any state agency or offender program needs to be included.

On the table are various proposals known as the "3 Strikes Law." This law has been tried in California and has not proven to reduce crime. At first glance locking up repeat felons for good sounds like a pretty good idea. However, this as law does not allow a judge to look at the whole picture and make a rational decision. Raised Bills Nos. 7 and 8 speak of 40 years confinement to life in prison. Knowing that while incarcerated in the state of Connecticut many inmates do not receive adequate, if any, treatment how can we rightfully lock someone up for 40 or more years who has not honestly been given a chance to succeed. These and other proposals speak of the intent of the convicted person but to honestly know and determine the intent of another person's actions is not possible. How many times have you, in your personal life, been accused of having an intention different from that which you had?

The "3 Strikes Law" in any form to me is not justice, especially to the families and friends of the convicted person.

In the Statement of purpose for Raised Bill No. 8 it is noted that a public registry of all parolees be set up. Since a public registry is already in place for sex offenders I see it as only fair that *all* persons on parole and probation be required to be on a public registry. Having a convicted arsonist live next door to me is much more frightening than someone who may have had "consensual" sex with an older minor.

In Raised Bills Nos. 9, 11, and 12 the Board of Pardons and Paroles will review the complete file of each inmate before the inmate appears in front of the Board.

This is something which should be expected of every board member. The person in charge of the files at each correctional institution needs to be held accountable that the files are handed over in their entirety to the Board of Pardons and Paroles before the hearing takes place. At one parole hearing of which I am familiar the inmate made reference to certain items in his file and as the Board members looked for the items and found them missing they asked the facility Parole Officer where the items were and her response (not quoted exactly) was that she didn't think they were relevant and had removed them from the file. The hearing was recessed and the P.O. was sent to her office to retrieve the missing papers. The missing papers included certificates of program completions and work and behavior reports from the facility which demonstrated the likelihood that the inmate would not re-offend. A close personal friend when he went in front of the Board of Pardons and Paroles noted that many personal papers were missing from his file. From conversations with this friend and others who have been incarcerated, it seems that there may be a persistent culture of withholding information from the Bd. Of Pardons and Paroles both in favor and against inmates.

Requiring that the entire inmate file (including work and behavior reports and certificates of program completions and participation) be made available to the Board of Pardons and Paroles prior to a parole hearing and requiring that the entire file have been read is needed. Raised Bill No. 11 introduced by the Judiciary Committee does just this.

Raised Bill No. 9 line 27 – 37, proposes that members of the board shall devote full time to their duties... What a novel idea.

Raised Bill No. 9 lines 55 - 82 references furloughs for inmates who have a dying relative. By allowing an inmate of any security level to visit a close dying relative or to attend the funeral of said person while accompanied by a guardian of the state can only benefit society in that it will help to prevent the inmate from harboring more anger which can lead to re-offending once the inmate has been released.

Concerning the nursing and mental health staff at correctional facilities, Raised Bill No. 13 is necessary. After hearing the stories from a number of former inmates about the medical care at numerous correctional facilities something needs to be done. Scheduling a time to see someone on the medical staff is difficult at best. The mental health staff was almost completely unavailable to those who I know who have been through the system. As the Department of **Corrections** counseling

by trained counselors should be provided if we expect corrections in behavior to be made.

In conclusion, I am **not** in favor of the "3 Strikes Law" in any form. Secondly, requiring the members of the Board of Pardons and Paroles to be full time employees of the board and requiring that every member be provided with the entire inmate file days prior to the scheduled parole hearing makes good sense for the public. Lastly, creating laws which allow for an inmate to be held beyond the term of his / her sentence is not an option. Inmates, like the rest of us, have family and friends who love them and want them fully back in their lives. Mandating that those under "supervised release" attend specific programs is always a good idea as long as the programs are of value. Most former inmates desire to return to being productive members of the community and their families. All deserve to be given this chance.

Please allow the voice of reason and not the voices and fears of the outspoken minority influence our laws and policies. I am grateful to have my close friend back in a "normal" relationship and not one where our phone calls are limited and monitored and our visits limited and guarded. He is working and living in the community, paying taxes and being a productive non re-offending citizen. This one particular friend is not the only former inmate I know.

Respectfully submitted,

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