

Good Afternoon,

I want to first thank you all for the opportunity to be here today and to speak about what qualities and characteristics the Commission should look for when considering a candidate for the position of Chief State's Attorney.

I come before the Commission as a member of the public and a student. I attend Central Connecticut State University, and I am enrolled in the Masters of Science in Criminal Justice program. As part of my course work, I am in the preliminary stages of preparing a research proposal. The subject of my proposal is Conviction Integrity Units. For anyone not familiar with Conviction Integrity Units, they are a unit that customarily operates within the State's Attorney's Office, and they provide a review of cases where a conviction has already been secured that has potential implications of a wrongful conviction and actual innocence of the defendant. They work to recognize when a wrongful conviction has occurred, to correct it and to hopefully prevent the same mistakes in future cases. I am in the process of researching where Conviction Integrity Units exist and whether or not they are effective in preventing wrongfully convicted individuals from spending several unwarranted years in prison. Included in my initial research are states that do have Conviction Integrity Units, where they have been most effective and why. I believe the research will show that model CIUs are those that include a collaboration of the State's Attorney's office, the Public Defender's Office as well as Innocence Project attorneys. Some states also include experienced criminal defense attorneys from those respective states as part of the CIU team. CIUs are proven more effective when it is a collaboration such as this. Existing literature refers to these as the "model" CIUs.

There are currently 44 Conviction Integrity Units operating in the United States. Those units have collectively secured 343 exonerations. Connecticut currently does not have a CIU. However, Connecticut has had 25 exonerations of individuals who have been wrongfully convicted over the past 30 years. Those 25 individuals have spent 265 years in prison collectively even though they were innocent. If there were a CIU to review these cases, it could eliminate the lengthy appeals process and these individuals losing sometimes decades of their lives. The cost of incarcerating these individuals for all of these years as well as the cost of wrongful conviction compensation must be considered when contemplating whether or not a Conviction Integrity Unit would be cost effective. But what must be considered the most is the amount of years taken from the lives of the wrongfully convicted, for those years lost can never be truly compensated.

The need for a Conviction Integrity Unit in Connecticut is one that I feel should be addressed. I am hopeful that the new Chief State's Attorney will be someone who places conviction integrity as a priority and will work towards establishing a CIU in Connecticut.

I want to again thank the Commission for your time this afternoon and the ability to voice my opinion on the hiring of a new Chief State's Attorney and what qualities and characteristics he or she should have.

Malissa Hurry-
Central Connecticut State University

~~hurryma@my.ccsu.edu~~