

Hello everyone, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my story. This is my first time testifying, and I truly appreciate the chance to speak with you today.

My name is Andrew Freeman, I'm 35 years old. I was arrested and incarcerated at the age of 21 for the charges for which I am serving time now. I take full responsibility for my actions and deeply regret the choices I made on that day. I am remorseful, and I sincerely apologize for the harm I caused.

To be completely honest, when I first entered prison, I still had the mindset of a teenager, immature, stubborn, and unwilling to listen to others, even my own family and friends. I thought I knew everything and believed I was untouchable. But prison forced me to face reality, to grow up, and to make a choice:

I could either remain the same, naïve, immature, and limited by my inability to read, write, and spell, or I could take this opportunity to transform myself into someone better, someone I never imagined I could be. I chose growth.

I began by writing letters to my family and friends, determined to improve my penmanship and spelling. When I was first incarcerated, my spelling ability was only about 15%. Now, through daily practice, reading the dictionary, studying, and writing, I've improved to about 60%.

Education has been at the heart of my journey. Over the past 12 years, I have completed numerous courses, including financial literacy, personal development programs, and classes aimed at self-improvement, such as *The Way to Happiness*. I am currently a first-year student at UMA with my major in psychology. None of this was court-mandated; I sought them out because I was committed to bettering myself.

I take immense pride in my education and rehabilitation. I want to show my community, my family, and my friends that I am capable of growth and change. This journey has opened my eyes and taught me to love and respect people, regardless of their background or circumstances. I have no space in my heart for hatred, only reflection, accountability, and a drive to become the best version of myself.

I am not defined by my past mistakes, but by the choices I make moving forward. One of my favorite quotes captures this perfectly:

*"Your past does not determine who you are. Your choices do."*

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the committee. I urge you to vote *ought to pass* on [LD 648 - An Act to Expand the Supervised Confinement Program].

Thank you. Andrew Freeman