

Philip Scott Cannon
Testimony on SB 1584
Senate Committee on Judiciary - Public Hearing on February 8, 2022

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee.

My name is Philip Scott Cannon. I spent over 11 years in prison in Oregon for a crime that I did not commit, and, in 2009, I became the ninth exoneree from Oregon listed on the National Registry of Exonerations.

I was indicted for murder in 1998, and, after I was wrongly convicted, I was sentenced to three life sentences without the possibility of parole.

Eleven years later, in August 2009, the post-conviction court vacated the conviction, and on December 18, 2009, the charges against me were dismissed. I walked out of prison a free man.

My older son was eight years old when I was arrested. He hasn't had an easy life. He lost me when he was just a kid, and I can't give him those years back. My younger son was born while I was in prison. I missed everything from his first birthday to his first years of school.

My family stood by me the entire time. But the experience was still devastating.

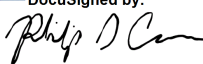
After I was released, I had to struggle to find work. I had been out of the job market for 11 years. And even though I was exonerated, there is still a stigma that attaches to anyone who has been in prison. It is not easy to get someone to take a chance on you.

I have had to fight every day to try to rebuild my life. I just got health insurance for the first time last year—nearly 11 years after I was released from prison.

I have been working in metal fabrication and, although I am proud of my work, it is tough on my body and I have suffered from health problems because of it.

My attorneys filed civil lawsuits in state and federal courts to get help me recover after my wrongful conviction. Those cases went up and back through the appellate courts multiple times. I never got my day in court. Claims were dismissed and defendants were dismissed because of procedural issues. Some defendants said I was too late. Some defendants said they had immunity. After ten years of fighting those civil suits, I had to give up.

I can't get back the years that I lost. I can't go back and watch my boys grow up. But a right to compensation would give me the chance to finally wake up from that nightmare. I support SB 1584, and I urge you to pass it. Thank you.

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Philip Scott Cannon