

My name is Laurie Moore.

3/5/24 RE: HB 5431

I am 70 years old and live in Otsego County.

Please bear with me as I make this statement – I had a stroke that sometimes interferes with my ability to speak.

I appreciate that this bill is trying to fix the Wrongful Incarceration Compensation Act. I am here to ask you to remember those of us who were harmed by those problems, and amend this bill to allow us to benefit from those reforms.

Here is my story.

In November 1987, I was convicted of a crime I did not commit.

I appealed my conviction on numerous grounds.

The appellate court overturned my conviction and ordered a new trial, after finding that the judge in my case had given an improper instruction to the jury. The appellate court went no further, and did not address the many other issues I raised in my appeal.

The prosecution then dismissed the charges against me.

I was free, but I received no reentry help from the state or compensation, and I have struggled in many ways as a result of my wrongful conviction.

I had hoped that the Wrongful Incarceration Compensation Act would have been available to people like me: individuals whose convictions had been reversed and who could, given a fair chance, establish that they were factually innocent of the crime for which they were incarcerated.

Unfortunately, WICA excludes cases like mine. It requires that we show that our convictions were overturned on grounds of “new evidence of innocence.” My case shows how unfair that is: I am innocent, but had no control over how the appellate court decided to overturn my conviction.

As the deadline to apply for WICA compensation was approaching, I decided to apply, if for no other reason than on principle: I am innocent and I can prove it.

I accepted \$25,000 in exchange for dismissing my claim. Not nothing, but roughly one-tenth of what I was due under WICA, had I been given a chance to prove my innocence.

I understand that this bill tries to fix that particular problem, and that IN THE FUTURE, all people with overturned convictions may be able to apply and have the chance to prove their innocence and be compensated.

That is good. But what about me and others like me, some who did apply for WICA, and some who didn't, and who were harmed by the problems you are now fixing?

Justice must look back as well as forward. Rather than leave me and others behind, I ask you to amend this bill to allow those of us who were harmed by the problems you are fixing to benefit from those reforms.

Thank you.