



Testimony by:

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Social Impact Bonds: Can They Help Government Achieve Better Results for Families in Need?

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Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the House Ways and Means Committee. My name is Robert Romo and I am very excited, very proud and a little nervous to be here. Thank you so much for inviting me and letting me share my story.

I was released from prison after doing 13 ½ years, and three days out, my parole officer gave me two options for employment programs to attend. The first program required me to wear a uniform and that made me feel uncomfortable and reminded me of prison. I wanted to take my shot with CEO.

As soon as I started CEO, I felt positive about gaining employment sooner than I thought. Everything felt professional from the first day. It felt good to come to class every morning at 7am, to have a place to go that made me feel positive about myself. My life skills instructor consistently treated us like equals every day. It never felt phony and that got my attention right away. She truly believed in me and pushed me to accomplish things that I was not sure I could. She instilled in me to do my best every day and to believe that my conviction did not define me. I was taught that presentation helps define who we are. I learned how to interact appropriately and be professional on the job. I learned self-confidence and the CEO staff helped build my self-esteem.

My job coach worked with me doing mock interviews. She never said my way was wrong but encouraged me to look at different ways of expressing myself. I worked on a part-time transitional job site doing maintenance on college campuses. At the same time, I was attending the carpentry program at the CEO training center, 2 nights a week. CEO kept me busy; there was not a lot of leisure time, which was very good because staying busy meant I was not tempted by bad habits and old acquaintances. I was totally focused on my future.

None of this was easy, but my instructors motivated me, pushed me and believed in me 100%. I had to get good grades on multiple tests and have good attendance to have CEO pay my tuition at a local Community College for the next part of the carpentry program. I did that and before the training was over, my job developer set up an interview for me at a hotel, and I was hired on the spot doing maintenance and carpentry.

I kept in touch with CEO because they told me I **could** and **should** do something I loved, not to get stuck in just any job. I loved construction and they sent me on another interview and again, I was hired on the spot. On that job, I met someone I had known while I was incarcerated. He told me about an opportunity with his window company and set up a meeting with the owner. I was planning to go in a suit but my CEO Job developer suggested I should dress like I was ready to start work that day. I did and I was hired on the spot. I have been there since last October and have already participated in building two sites.

Honestly, I could not have achieved all of this without the support of CEO. They helped me see beyond my conviction to a future that is really positive. I am grateful for this second chance. I always had a passion to help others who are in a similar situation and CEO is helping

fuel that dream for me. This opportunity to speak today is a first step toward fulfilling that goal.
Thank you again for having me come here today.

Respectfully Submitted,
Robert Romo