

Statement of Jerome Horn:

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I want to thank you for inviting me here today. . . to tell my story and maybe help with the issue that is being discussed.

I am currently an inmate at the Essex County Jail in Newark, New Jersey. I've been there since last month after I was arrested for violating my parole. My parole started after I got out of prison in 1987, but I stopped reporting to my parole officer in 1997. The truth is, even though I knew that I would be a fugitive, I just thought that I had paid enough for the crime I committed. I had turned my life around, away from crime, and didn't want to report any more.

I found out after my arrest that the police were able to find me after they matched up my fugitive warrant with the Social Security files. They were then able to find where I was receiving my Social Security checks, in Patterson, New Jersey. I wasn't exactly hiding, but I had no idea that they could find me this way.

I was convicted of Armed Robbery in 1981, and spent six years at Rahway State Prison. While I was in prison, I found out that I have a heart condition that puts me at risk of sudden death. After I got out of Rahway in 1987, I went to live with my mother in Newark. I can't work because of my heart problem so I don't have any insurance. I applied for Social Security benefits, and then Medicaid began covering my medical bills. I don't receive checks from any other government programs.

In 1997, I moved to Patterson, New Jersey, but I kept my checks going to my mother's house in Newark. That was about the same time that I stopped reporting to my parole officer.

I moved again six months ago to a new place in Patterson, but this time I sent my change of address to Social Security and started getting my checks there. Everything was going along just fine until last month when the police showed up to arrest me. Yes, I did know that I was a fugitive and that the parole people were looking for me, but I didn't know that there was anything wrong with me getting my monthly SSI checks.

I was told that my story would help provide you with a little more perspective on this issue and for that I'm glad to help. But to be totally honest with you, I'm also here to help myself. I am truly sorry for having violated my parole and I hope that the parole board will look kindly upon my being here today. I have a son that I am very close with and because of my heart problem, I want to spend as much time with him as I possibly can.

Thank you again for inviting me to tell my story. I'll be glad to answer any questions that you may have.