

**Statement of Brian Potaczek  
Electrician Austin Electric**

**House Ways and Means Committee  
Subcommittee on Human Resources**

**April 12, 2018**

Thank you, Chairman Smith and all the members of this committee, for allowing me to speak to you today about programs such as the Sunrise Employment Center in AZ Department of Corrections.

My name is Brian Potaczek and I would like to share the impact this program has had on my life and how it has made me a part of society and help me regain my family and friends back into my life.

Before completing this program, I can truthfully say that I had no positive direction in life along with no sense of hope that I could make things better. When I was 19, I had my wisdom teeth removed and was prescribed opioids for the pain. Next thing I knew, I was hooked.

Being an avid drug user with prescription pills for 6 years I slowly but surely saw my life declining before my eyes. I ended up losing everything I ever owned and loved and ended up incarcerated for 6 years due to the desire to do whatever it took to keep getting high. After another two more prison stents because of my addiction I finally came across a program that I desired and wanted more than anything to complete, the Sunrise Employment Center AZ Department of Corrections.

Many companies came to the Employment Center but one that truly had me fascinated was Austin Electric. After listening to the guests speak about the criteria and requirements I quickly signed up for their training program and never looked back. One thing that caught my attention was how they would talk about the company as a family and how they would help us out and do whatever they could to make us successful.

In the training program I learned the tools and knowledge of how to be an electrician which is something I had never done before and never imagined doing. Upon my release I was hired and started work that week and was given rides to and from work to maintain a job with this company. I started with Austin at \$12 per hour and in seven short months I am up to \$22 per hour.

I can truthfully say from first-hand experience that this program has made many success stories and only will continue to make more. It instills a sense of hope in the lost, a family for those who need one and the motivation to be a better person of society. It's amazing when you can work with others in the program and slowly but surely see their lives changing. That's something that always encouraged me to stay on the right track.

I never really had goals after being released from prison until I entered this program. Since then have rebuilt my trust with my family and friends and have regained their love and encouragement. Not only have I obtained employment with the same company upon my release I also have been able to support myself and not become another statistic by going back to prison. I'm doing things now that I never thought I would be able to do like buy Girl Scout cookies and meet my mom for coffee.