

RE: HB 1104

I would like to express my support of HB 1104 regarding North Dakota's sentencing of violent offenders from the current rule of 85% of their sentence to 65% of the sentence. There have been a lot of changes in the ND penal system in the last few years – some positive and some not. As the mother of one of these offenders, I am more aware of some of these changes than the average citizen. Understandably, there are many people who believe a violent offender should be serving 100% of their sentence and be glad they can “get away with 85%”.

Our family has come into contact with many of the inmates at NDSP and their families since our introduction to the judicial system in November of 2003. There have been many non-violent sentenced inmates that have been there, were released on parole and shortly thereafter were back at NDSP for another violation or a parole violation. Unfortunately, for some of them it seems as though the doors at NDSP are revolving. The general feeling of the longtime inmates is that they have no desire to repeat a violent offense and end up back at NDSP. We are aware of only one inmate that served more than 10 years that ended up back at NDSP due to another offense.

Please consider reducing the rule of 85% to 65% for those offenders who have NOT been involved in any violent behaviors during their incarceration; possibly leaving this decision to the Department of Corrections based on an individual basis. It would certainly give a long term inmate something to work toward. For these inmates a second chance would be valued very highly and not taken lightly.

Thank you for your consideration and, hopefully, your support and passage of HB 1104.

Rhonda Schmidkunz