

Testimony on House Concurrent Resolution 3026
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Good morning,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Concurrent Resolution 3026. My name is Jacob Agus-Kleinman and I am a Senior Policy Analyst at the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center. The CSG Justice Center is a national, non-profit, non-partisan organization that works with all branches of government to help states improve outcomes for youth and adults in the justice system. As part of our work, we have supported states across the country in implementing re-entry practices designed to improve outcomes and reduce recidivism across both juvenile and adult justice systems.

Over the last seven years, the CSG Justice Center has had the opportunity to work with both the adult and juvenile justice systems in North Dakota to facilitate a range of efforts to align policies and practices with what we know from research works to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for youth and adults. This has included establishing a designation of Child in Need of Services to support access to services outside of the Juvenile Court and investing savings from reductions in corrections populations to invest in community behavioral services for individuals in the criminal justice system. These successes provide a strong foundation for North Dakota to make even further improvements to its juvenile and criminal justice systems and focus on ensuring that every young person and adult are successfully reintegrated into the community following a period of incarceration.

As a national organization that has worked in almost every state throughout the country, we consistently see the impact that research based best practice has on reducing recidivism and improving outcomes for youth and adults re-entering the community. States have worked to implement these best practices across a range of topics, including behavioral health, economic mobility, and education in order to improve re-entry, reduce recidivism, and improve outcomes. For example, in Florida, a partnership with community based treatment providers to deliver pre- and post-release services to individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders was part of a series of reforms which dropped the three year recidivism rate 27 percent. Similarly, in South Dakota, after a statewide assessment process, the South Dakota Reentry Council worked to improve interagency case management, identify statutory and practice-based barriers to reintegration, and addressed gaps in community-based re-entry services as part of an effort that led to a 14 percent reduction in the recidivism rate across the state. Furthermore, as knowledge around the impacts of barriers has continued to evolve, states have engaged in projects to reduce barriers to licensure and hiring and increased access to post-secondary education to support individuals in pursuing meaningful careers as they re-enter the community. A RAND study found that nationally, individuals who engaged in correctional education had 43 percent lower odds of recidivating than those who did not, and were 13 percent more likely to be employed post release.

These examples show the public safety benefits of improving reentry policies and practices. Ensuring that the highest-risk offenders in the juvenile and criminal justice system have effective reentry services and supports is amongst the most important next steps that North Dakota can take to promote increased community safety and create pathways to economic mobility for youth and adults in the justice system. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today, and I am happy to answer any questions.