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Committee Testimony for House Concurrent Resolution 3026
House Judiciary Committee

Mister Chairman and Members of the Judiciary Committee.
Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Sister Kathleen Atkinson. I serve as the director of *Ministry on the Margins*, an ecumenical, volunteer-based program serving over 1200 people a week. Along with a food pantry, street outreach, and emergency sheltering; we're involved with spiritual groups in the men's penitentiary, women's penitentiary and Missouri River Correctional Center, the *Free Through Recovery* Program, a Families of the Incarcerated Support Group, and the DOCR Children of the Incarcerated Initiative. Ministry on the Margins currently employs 6 people who are second chance hires and we're actively involved in supporting men and women who have been incarcerated to **attain** and **maintain** employment. I've been blessed to do this work full time for 9 years.

Many of these programs are possible because of the work of previous legislative studies, committees, and the subsequent laws passed. A great amount of funding is being invested in rehabilitation and re-entry of our incarcerated citizens back into the community – more than 95% will once again become our neighbors, employees, colleagues. Success of these public and private programs not only save taxpayer dollars, but support more people to become taxpayers and contributing community members. There **is success** and there **is also a great challenge** as evidenced by North Dakota's 40.3 percent recidivism rate. House Concurrent Resolution No 3026 continues the process of any successful strategic planning: 1)Identify the problem, 2)Promote possible solutions, 3)Establish funding, 4)Implement, 5) Evaluate, 6)Improve. This resolution simply establishes a study for steps 5 and 6 – evaluate and improve.

It is fiscally responsible to do so.

***Even more profoundly*, re-entry is about changing lives rather than just doing time** and that's hard work. But it's worth it. Because our people and our communities are worth it.

