

Mister Chairman, Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Friends and colleagues of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

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.

10 years ago I came into this very room and I started my first bible study with men who were inmates here. Scared like everything to walk down the hallways! It changed my life. 9 1/2 years ago I heard the fears and hopes of a man who was being released from prison and hoped never to return. I simply said "I'll pick you up" and that is the beginning of MOTM. It also changed my life.

By listening to the people here in this room I hope you are learning that most people who are incarcerated are men and women just like us, many of whom have experienced challenges far greater than any of us, and they who hope to change their lives. This place and community has the opportunity to be a place of healing and restoration. Programs that focus on behavioral health, restorative justice, addiction treatment, job training are all programs that focus on this space as a place **from which** people will be returning to be productive members of our workforce and communities. Not all will be able to accomplish this... but many.

I hope you're hearing that this is about changing lives more than just doing time and that's hard work. It's a great investment of finances on behalf of the state. **But** it's worth it. Because our people and our communities are worth it.

*stay out of support club*  
*WITNESS US But help people*

*represent of produce from the garden*  
*Employees - inmates full day*  
*3*  
*4*  
*5*  
*6*

*Quarter a down that I know he had nothing*  
*Homeless - debts*  
*No Money - S.O.*

*even our change cannot always overcome systems stacked against you - housing burden of debt*  
*I thank ya*  
*No military*

*97%*  
*40.3%*  
*racism*