



MINISTRY ON THE MARGINS

P.O. Box 3065

201 N. 24th St., Bismarck, ND 58501

701-223-6315 • MinistryOnTheMargins.com

My name is Nate Mickelson, the Prison Reentry Manager at Ministry on the Margins, a nonprofit with a dedicated reentry program here in Bismarck. As one of the very few providers accepting everyone with dignity, which includes all sex offenders, we have a unique insight and experience with the most difficult and complex individuals with a criminal history. Working with sex offenders on a daily basis, I have seen firsthand the extreme difficulties and barriers they encounter from social stigmatization and family disownment to quick loss of employment and the insurmountable task of finding housing. As a reentry manager, a key component of my focus is rehabilitation, compliance and ultimately an advancement in opportunities and social support, both keys in successful reentry to fight recidivism and our growing prison population. Those on the registry, in addition to their conviction, are already behind the eight ball with the added task of following, understanding and complying with a convoluted, and nearly unnavigable registry filled with legalese.

I am going to share a real story with all of you today. JT was convicted of a sexual offense back in 2011 and released in 2014. Upon release, he is ostracized by his family, lost some of his friends, living in a halfway house, unemployed and deemed a low-risk sex offender. Eventually, JT manages to land a job, complete his court mandated treatment, attends SA meetings, finds housing, even settles down with a significant other. However, he quickly loses his new job and housing not because of his conviction, but because he is on the registry. JT cannot accompany his kids to school or be on school property, be a part of carpool, and is shunned by local parents and neighbors. His significant other is excluded from social activities, programs and loses some of her friends. Despite this, JT pushes on, is steadfast and 3 years later, completes his federal supervision early, is fully employed, housed with his family, compliant and been on the registry for 10 years. He is low risk. To celebrate his early release, they book a cruise with 10 other friends. A week before he is scheduled to embark, he is notified by the cruise line he cannot go on the cruise as he is a registered sex offender. He even gets a passport which is specially marked in a way every country he tries to visit, notifies them that he is a sex offender. He cannot travel abroad. A sex offender. Does that term make you uncomfortable? Who here wants to talk about sex offenders?

My point is, despite completing all of which **is lawfully required of him**, the small victories, personal and professional advancement, and being successfully rehabilitated, JT continues to face an uphill battle even after putting his life's pieces back together-the stigma of being on the sex offender registry.

I support HB 1231 which will allow a people like JT, a rehabilitated, compliant sex offender to slowly regain a piece of their humanity back, continuing rebuilding, heal the social scars and open future opportunities

Thank you, Chairman Klemin and members of the house judiciary committee, for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you.



MINISTRY ON THE MARGINS
P.O. Box 3065
201 N. 24th St., Bismarck, ND 58501
701-223-6315 • MinistryOnTheMargins.com

Nate Mickelson

Prison Reentry Manager

Ministry on the Margins

701-390-4000

nathan@ministryonthemargins.org