

HB1549

Thank you for allowing me to share my experience in support of this bill to support transition from incarceration to community living.

I have worked at mentoring a male non-violent felon (as a surrogate Grandma, no relationship) for about 10 years through 3 periods of incarceration. In large part, the second and third arrests resulted from the lack of support to re-enter society. That re-entry was harder after the second incarceration and we have yet to see the result of finishing this third trip to the penitentiary. It seems to me that the state releases prisoners with no thought about where they will live, what they will eat, who will provide the meds they may have been on during their jail time, or continuation of any services they may have been receiving. A particular need I see is training in money management, including budgeting. Perhaps assigning a representative payee for some would be a good step to legal independence.

My mentee, "D", did receive training while incarcerated the first time and held a good job for a short time after release. However, he was released with less than a week's worth of meds he had been taking, and I was not aware of any follow-up support from the state. The housing "D" was able to afford should be prohibited by the city of Fargo and was inhabited by other persons you would not like to meet any more than I liked to meet. Supportive housing services such as Redemption Road and others provide a positive way to practice communal living with shared responsibilities. Useful transportation is a major issue to successful employment and involvement with positive outside activities. "D" became active in the little church I attended when I picked him up. He was well received by members. That only took care of Sunday morning, not the rest of the week.

We need workers. Let's address that need by supporting those being released from jail the first time so can become useful members of society and not re-offend.

Collection and sharing of data regarding all activities of DOC and those for whom they are responsible would be useful in making decisions for programming and financial support. The public should have access to more specific information regarding this large part of state spending. Such information may be useful to making successful transition from jail to community a shared responsibility.

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