



Chairman Klemin & Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Josh Helmer, and I serve as the Executive Director for Centre, Inc., a North Dakota non-profit that has provided re-entry and transitional services for justice-involved individuals since 1976. We contract with the ND Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) and the Federal Bureau of Prisons, operating programs in Fargo, Grand Forks, Mandan, and Williston, with nearly 190 employees statewide. Our mission is to provide rehabilitative services that promote social reintegration.

Concerns with SB 2128:

If Senate Bill 2128 passes as currently amended, it will **severely limit access to re-entry and transitional services** for individuals exiting North Dakota's prison system.

Specifically:

- **Section 3 ("Eligible Offender")** excludes individuals with a broad range of non-violent offenses—such as driving under suspension or drug ingestion—from ever participating in transitional facilities. This means over **90% of inmates** will no longer be eligible for transitional placement, no matter their progress or earned time.
- **Section 10 ("Confinement")** prevents the DOCR from placing ineligible individuals in transitional facilities, effectively eliminating their access to critical re-entry programs.

Public Safety & Fiscal Concerns:

Transitional facilities provide **essential drug and alcohol treatment** to DOCR inmates. If this bill passes, the Parole Board will face two choices for most inmates:

1. **Release them directly into the community without treatment**, increasing recidivism.
2. **Keep them in prison longer**, at a much higher taxpayer cost.

Evidence-based research, including the summary of research from Dr. Myers in written testimony on this bill, demonstrates that **Truth in Sentencing laws without re-entry support do not increase public safety, reduce recidivism, or save money.**

Why Transitional Programs Work:

Centre, Inc.'s programs focus on **accountability, employment, and rehabilitation**. In 2024 alone:

- **71% of DOCR inmates and 77% of DOCR parolees** successfully completed the program.

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- **90% of program graduates secured stable housing**, reducing homelessness upon release.
- **Over \$800,000 in personal savings** was accumulated by participants, helping them reintegrate successfully.
- Participants contributed over **\$800,000 toward restitution, fines, and room and board**, reducing taxpayer burdens.

Safety & Oversight:

Contrary to some claims, Centre, Inc.'s facilities are **not shelters or traditional halfway houses**. They operate under strict security protocols, including **24/7 staff monitoring and video surveillance**. Residents follow **strict schedules**, and law enforcement has **full access** to our facilities, as documented in signed Memorandums of Understanding with police departments and their participation in Centre, Inc's quarterly Community Relations Board meetings.

Conclusion:

While Centre, Inc. supports SB 2128's provisions to increase penalties for violent offenses against law enforcement, **its restrictions on transitional facilities will have serious unintended consequences**. Without access to structured re-entry programs, more individuals will **return to crime, increasing victimization and reducing public safety**. The fiscal impact will also be significant, as longer incarcerations will **cost taxpayers more without improving outcomes**.

For these reasons, I **strongly urge a "Do Not Pass" vote on SB 2128**.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Josh Helmer,
Executive Director