

Testimony in Favor of SB 2015

My name is Nathan Mickelson, the Prison Re-entry Manager at Ministry on the Margins (MOTM), a nonprofit in Bismarck - Mandan started by Sister Kathleen Atkinson who has over 30 years' experience in prison reentry. Our reentry program focuses on identifying and delivering the much-needed resources to those re-entering society after a period of incarceration. Since beginning with Ministry, I have worked synergistically with the DOCR in several aspects both inside and outside the wall from teaching classes, attending community resource fairs, pre-release planning with case workers to a reentry supper club, a Bismarck – Mandan prison Re-entry coalition and even a community Re-entry resource sharing event to identify and streamline organizational resources.

Having gone through my own Re-entry experiences, I am familiar with the difficult challenges and barriers faced by those re-entering society. The DOCR understands the importance of reentry, the complicated mess of navigating these barriers and the need for resident support. Their dedication to programming, resource delivery, staff education and investment and most importantly rehabilitation have been integral components in helping those succeed upon release. Continued financial support is necessary to enrich and develop behavioral health programs, staff development, constructive collaboration with other community partners and educational opportunities to maximize not only the reentry process but the resident's well-being and foundation. This dignified approach exemplified by the DOCR offers residents a chance to rebuild in a positive, progressive, and functional matter, essential for setting the stage for future growth and stabilization when released. By working together with DOCR and city, state, and local organizations, MOTM will continue to serve as a staple to serve those who need it most by picking up those falling through the cracks.

We are building something special here in North Dakota by focusing on restorative justice and addressing the root cause rather than incarceration. Changing lives is not an easy task but we can continue taking the necessary steps to do so. Thank you.

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