

Centre

January 15, 2025

North Dakota Legislative Council
State Capitol
Senate Judiciary Committee
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Re: Opposition to SB 2128

Senate Judiciary Committee:

Over the past 40 years, Centre has been a leading provider of residential reentry services in North Dakota and a proud partner of the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (NDDOCR) in providing rehabilitative services to justice-involved individuals reintegrating to society. As an agency, Centre has prided itself on implementing evidence-based programming to improve outcomes for program participants, reduce recidivism, and positively impact community safety. One of the agency's most recent strategic planning session goals is to prioritize putting agency resources into evidence-based programming and participating in ongoing assessments conducted by qualified NDDCOR personnel to ensure progress is made on implementing tactics designed to reduce recidivism.

While Centre supports aspects of SB 2128, which aim to increase penalties for individuals who commit aggressive or violent offenses toward law enforcement and those who flee or attempt to elude law enforcement, other aspects, which aim to change the criteria for individuals who qualify to participate in transitional facilities, such as those Centre operates in Fargo, Grand Forks, and Mandan, would be detrimental to the successful reintegration of justice-involved individuals to our communities and would negatively impact community safety, while also being fiscally irresponsible.

Individuals screened by the NDDOCR and deemed appropriate for referral to Centre's transitional programming receive a wide array of services aimed at ensuring accountability and providing support as they reintegrate into society. Examples of these services include individual case management to identify goals to address an individual's most significant risk areas, skill-building groups, individual and group substance abuse services, which include random alcohol and drug screening.

Centre's policies and procedures maintain fidelity to community corrections best practices. As an agency that also contracts with the Federal Bureau of Prisons and North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, Centre participates in numerous announced and unannounced audits annually to ensure contractual compliance and effective delivery of services. The agency also utilizes an internal quality control program to analyze and assess the effectiveness of its policies, procedures, and programming. Centre employees receive ongoing training in Core Correctional Practices, Nonviolent Crisis Prevention and Intervention, CPR, First Aid, Emergency Response, Identifying Suicide Risk, and Searches and Inspection to name a few. In addition to training, Centre has expansive safety and security measures in place to ensure resident accountability and quick communication with referral sources and local law enforcement to ensure a swift response to noncompliance with program rules.

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In 2024, Centre received 232 DOCR Inmate admissions and had 161 discharges. Of those 161 discharges, 114 (70.8%) were successful with 103 (90%) of those successfully discharged releasing to stable housing. Also, of the 161 discharges, 133 (82%) were employed at the time of discharge. Participants on DOCR Inmate status were administered 21,145 alcohol tests with 21,144 (99.995%) being negative and 2,295 drug screens with 2,231 (97.2%) being negative. Centre also received 216 DOCR Parole admissions in 2024 and discharged 348 from programming. Of those 348 discharges, 267 (76.7%) were successful with 234 (87.6%) of those successfully discharged releasing to stable housing. Also, of the 348 discharges, 247 (71.0%) were employed at the time of discharge. Participants on DOCR Parole status were administered 33,363 alcohol tests with 33,354 (99.97%) being negative and 3,651 drug screens with 3,504 (96.0%) being negative.

Between DOCR Inmate and DOCR Parole participants in 2024, a total of \$30,218.89 in restitution, \$100,555.64 in fines, and \$675,677.20 in room and board was paid by participants, which helped to alleviate the burden for North Dakota taxpayers. It is also important to point out that during this period, Centre's DOCR participants discharged with a total of \$877,761 in their personal accounts. Stable housing, employment, and financial security are paramount in improving the likelihood of a successful reintegration.

In summary, while we agree with SB 2128's aim to increase penalties for violence against law enforcement and fleeing or eluding law enforcement, the widespread negative ramifications of SB 2128's intention to significantly reduce the opportunity of justice-involved individuals to be referred to transitional facilities to receive services which improve the likelihood of a successful reintegration to our communities and reduce recidivism cannot be understated. With that, we respectfully request that the Senate Judiciary Committee vote DO NOT PASS on SB 2128.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Josh Helmer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Josh" and "Helmer" being capitalized and prominent.

Josh Helmer
Executive Director