

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of North Dakota House Bill 1104 being passed. I request the State's support as well, shown in the form of reducing the rule of 85% for violent offenders to 65% or less.

The majority of violent offenders who are serving 85% are typically residents who have good behavior and do not get written up. They have families who are supportive and visit regularly. They work on having proper parameters and systems set in place for when their release date arrives. Many of these inmates are released after serving 85% with no additional support systems other than what they have set up individually. They do not have case managers helping them learn how to live outside the walls or following up with them to make sure they are making the right choices to move forward. This is a system that is set up to fail. Why not reduce the rule of 85%, release violent offenders who have maintained appropriate behaviors while serving time earlier and set up a monitoring system to help them walk the path of becoming beneficial citizens. Reduce the rule of 85% and create programs that are beneficial to the State, the violent offender, the offender's family and also the victim's family.

From the day many violent offenders begin serving a sentence within the walls of the North Dakota State Penitentiary, they are working on self improvements with their release date in mind and restitution for their victim's family. And yet, an earlier release date is not an option in any way shape or form. Drug offenders and sex offenders do not have to follow the rule of 85% and are provided opportunities for earlier release dates with good time and other options. And yet, these are the majority of inmates who are constantly in trouble within the walls. They are the majority of inmates who reoffend and return to the system time and again; it is not violent offenders who typically reoffend once released. They do not want to return. They are striving to be better.

It is time to reduce the rule of 85%. Let's reduce our prison population by creating valuable and productive citizens who can be released into society in less time than 85% of a sentence. Rehabilitation within prison in the form of counseling, self-improvement programs, faith based programs, family support, education on all levels and also ongoing programs once released will be valuable and worthwhile.

Instead of being a benefit to North Dakota the rule of 85% has instead institutionalized violent offenders that could be rehabilitated and made it harder for them to reenter society. Let's reduce the 85% rule to 65% and actually correct and rehabilitate.

Thank you for your consideration of passing North Dakota House Bill 1104.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Schmidkunz Arneson

The Sister of a Violent Offender Within NDSP Serving a 40 Year Sentence