

January 15,2016

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on Finance:

I am writing in response to the "Truth in Corrections Budget Act" bill that was reported on by Gilman Halsted for NPR. I support any legislation that focuses on curtailing correctional spending and advancing prison reform and policies related to effective parole review and correctional rehabilitation efforts.

Continued increases in correctional budgetary allotments are a failed practice in the State of Wisconsin. For the last 20 years, more-or-less, I've been incarcerated in the Wisconsin Department of Corrections for the crime of 1st degree attempted homicide with the penalty enhancers of concealed identity and possession of a dangerous weapon—the crime involved the shooting of a police officer while trying to elude arrest during a burglary. I received a 50-year sentence for a crime I committed at 19 years of age, following a traumatic loss in my family that devastated my life. I only mention this to emphasize my direct experiences in how I came to be incarcerated, and how that incarceration lead to my rehabilitation and current state in our correctional system. Upon coming to prison, I took every opportunity to complete all programming and to better myself significantly through college and technical college educational achievements. All of this was completed before my first parole hearing in 2008.

Despite my rehabilitation, the implementation of Truth-in-Sentencing (TIS) and concurrent changes to the policies for parole review and consideration have kept me and thousands of other Old Law inmates in prison far longer than necessary for rehabilitation or protection to the public. No Old Law inmate is the same person he/she was over 15 years ago; nevertheless, the Department of Corrections continues to restrict progress through the system, and the Parole Commission rarely grants discretionary parole outside a narrow timeframe when a person is at or very near their mandatory release dates. For TIS inmates, there is no. chance for early release.

All of this contributes to, overcrowding, health and safety concerns, and an outrageous agency budget allocation. The Department of Corrections has long been in need of a significant overhaul to become efficient and effective in managing the inmate population for programming, rehabilitation, and progression through the system. Nationally, correctional and criminal justice reforms have been growing; yet, Wisconsin lags behind and continues to finance an ineffective and wasteful system. Change is necessary to reduce the increasing financial costs of corrections and associated human potential that is being lost to the continued warehousing of the inmate population in Wisconsin. I pray that the "Truth in Corrections Budget Act" is the first step in overhauling a broken system.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this letter and the issues involved for the betterment of the State of Wisconsin.

Respectfully,

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