

March 12, 2016

Governor Hailey,

I'm going to start this letter by stating that I am only writing this due to a deep personal concern for the well-being of the youthful offenders in Turbeville.

The reason I start with that is because I want to be clear. I DO have a son in prison there, but I am not specifically referring to his case.

Donald Stephen Carswell is serving his second stint in that facility. He has done inexcusable things that have landed him there. He needs to serve his time, pay his sentence, etc. He has earned every second he gets in jail.

However, this is where the issue arises. Stephen has painted a picture of a drug infested, violent place with rampant corruption. I KNOW he lies. He's made a career out of it, but there are elements of what he says that cannot be ignored.

Example: recently, he was charged for 3 offenses, including inciting a riot. He was found guilty and is now in solitary for 150+ days.

Here's the issue. During this "riot", he was mased not once, but 2 times at the same time with two female



officers doing so. First, he claims that he didn't start a riot. He was disobedient. They say he threatened them. He claims otherwise. So, what if he happens to be telling a truth? How could he prove it when there are ZERO CAMERAS IN THE FACILITY???. Are you kidding me?

So, what lessons are these young adults learning? The guards can do whatever the hell they want and they just need to stay in line. Do you, or anyone in this legislation, believe that this is right? I get that prison eliminates certain rights listed in the constitution, but I'm pretty sure that doesn't include human rights. Just saying.

Also, do you think that inmates should be able to access cigarettes, K-2, pot, etc? Facetious, obviously. The problem is that it's all happening. I know it because Stephen has sat in front of his mother & grandmother high as hell in visitation. He told them. I'm pretty sure he wouldn't just make that up. He's told me that. Probation officer says it only gets in from inmates eating it and



pooping it out. I think cigarettes might not make it out. Once again, where is the accountability?? What kind of rehabilitation is going on? These are kids we are trying to get back into society one day and we are teaching them how to scheme their way through the day. The Lord himself would be ultimately disappointed that we seem to have given up on his children well short of his own grace would allow.

Stephen has gone as far as to call us, asking his mother to buy a prepaid card, give him the number so he could give it to the guard. He'll take part of it and give it to the guard to buy stuff.... I don't really know what to say about that.

Here's my real bottom line. My own son deserves punishment and he needs to hit his knees for God. But there is nothing going on inside that facility that gives him a shot. Not one. I plead with you to find out for yourself. If I'm wrong, so be it, but I'm pretty positive I'm NOT.

With All Due Respect,  
Steve Merchant