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Date: 11/29/2018 7:41:39 PM

Subject: Re: Fiscally Responsible / Humane Solutions for SCDC

Attachments: Reimagining-Prison_Executive-Summary.pdf

Good evening,

This is a follow up to my letter of October 14th that detailed the positive efforts of inmates being made in the Character Based Unit at McCormick Correctional Institution.

First I would like to thank those of you who took the time to read my letter.
Second, I would especially like to thank those of you who responded.

Shortly after writing to you I became aware of a national program that is similar in its efforts to provide second chances and put dignity and hope into corrections.

The Vera Institute of Justice is a justice reform change agent. Vera produces ideas, analysis, and research that inspire change in the systems people rely upon for safety and justice, and works in close partnership with government and civic leaders to implement it. Vera is currently pursuing core priorities of ending the misuse of jails, transforming conditions of confinement, and ensuring that justice systems more effectively serve America's increasingly diverse communities. For more information, visit www.vera.org.

On October 10th the Vera Institute of Justice held their Reimagining Prison conference at John Jay College. The event was the culmination of their Reimagining Prison Project and the release of their Reimagining Prison Report, which makes the case for a human-dignity centered approach to incarceration. I have attached a summary of their report and urge each of you to read it and consider their recommendations.

South Carolina can lead the way in supporting this grass roots effort that is already implementing many of the ideas identified in the Reimagining Project. Your support of the CBU program in South Carolina prisons and legislative reform can provide hope and positive change that will greatly benefit many.

Again thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Laurie McDermott

-----Original Message-----

From: lfm320

To: SLCIComm ; KarlAllen ; SeanBennett ; PaulCampbell ; SFGFComm ; RichardCash ; WesClimer ; TomCorbin ; SBIComm ; TomDavis ; MikeFanning ; MikeGambrell ; StephenGoldfinch ; GregGregory ; STransComm ; GregHembree ; BradHutto ; DarrellJackson ; KevinJohnson ; MarlonKimpson ; SFinComm ; GeraldMalloy ; ShaneMartin ; ShaneMassey ; JohnMatthews ; MargieBrightMatthews ; ThomasMcElveen ; Mia ; FloydNicholson ; SMediComm ; SJudComm ; GlennReese ; RexRice ; RonnieSabb ; JohnScott ; SandySenn ; NikkiSetzler ; KatrinaShealy ; VincentSheheen ; ScottTalley ; WilliamTimmons ; RossTurner ; SAgriComm ; KentWilliams ; TomYoung ; SLCIComm ; KarlAllen ; SeanBennett ; PaulCampbell ; SFGFComm ; RichardCash ; WesClimer ; TomCorbin ; SBIComm ; TomDavis ; MikeFanning ; MikeGambrell ; StephenGoldfinch ; GregGregory ; STransComm ; GregHembree ; BradHutto ; DarrellJackson ; KevinJohnson ; MarlonKimpson ; SFinComm ; GeraldMalloy ; ShaneMartin ; ShaneMassey ; JohnMatthews ; MargieBrightMatthews ; ThomasMcElveen ; Mia ; FloydNicholson ; SMediComm ; SJudComm ; GlennReese ; RexRice ; RonnieSabb ; JohnScott ; SandySenn ; NikkiSetzler ; KatrinaShealy ; VincentSheheen ; ScottTalley ; WilliamTimmons ; RossTurner ; SAgriComm ; KentWilliams ; TomYoung ; TerryAlexander ; RitaAllison ; CarlAnderson ; MichaelAnthony ; KatieArrington ; LucasAtkinson ; ToddAtwater ; JimmyBales ; NathanBallentine ; JustinBamberg ; BruceBannister ; LinBennett ; BethBernstein ; BartBlackwell ; BillBowers ; JeffBradley ; WendyBrawley ; RobertBrown ; BruceBryant ; MikeBurns ; MicahCaskey ; BillChumley ; GaryClary ; AlanClemmons ; BillClyburn ; GildaCobbHunter ; WilliamCogswell ; DerhamCole ; NealCollins ; HeatherCrawford ; BillCrosby ; JoeDaning ; SyllesteDavis ; GregDelleney ; ChandraDillard ; MaryGailDouglas ; GregDuckworth ; JasonElliott ; ShannonErickson ; RayeFelder ; KirkmanFinlay ; CalForrest ; MikeForrester ; RussellFry ; LaurieFunderburk ; CraigGagnon ; WendellGilliard ; JerryGovan ; DanHamilton ; KevinHardee ; ChrisHart ; JackieHayes ; PhyllisHenderson ; RosalynHenderson-Myers ; PatriciaHenegan ; BillHerbkersman ; LeeHewitt ; JHill ; DavidHiott ; BillHixon ; LonnieHosey ; LeonHoward ; ChipHuggins ; JosephJefferson ; JeffJohnson ; JayJordan ; JohnKing ; RogerKirby ; PatsyKnight ; DwightLoftis ; StevenLong ; PhillipLowe ; JayLucas ; NancyMace ; DavidMack ; JosiahMagnuson ; RickMartin ; PeterMcCoy ; JohnMcCravy ; JoeMcEachern ; TimMcGinnis ; CezarMcKnight ; DennisMoss ; SteveMoss ; ChrisMurphy ; BrandonNewton ; WestonNewton ; MandyNorrell ; RussellOtt ; AnneParks ; MarvinPendarvis ; MikePitts ; TommyPope ; JoshuaPutnam ; BobbyRidgeway ; MichaelRivers ; SamuelRivers ; LeolaRobinsonSimpson ; ToddRutherford ; HLCIComm ; GarySimrill ; MurrellSmith ; GarrySmith ; james ; MikeSottile ; KitSpires ; LeonStav ; TommyStringer ; EddieTallon ; BillTaylor ; AnneThayer ; IvoryThigpen ; MacToole ; AshleyTrantham ; DavidWeeks ; JayWest ; WillWheeler ; BrianWhite ; BillWhitmire ; RobertWilliams ; MarkWillis ; ChrisWooten ; RonnieYoung ; RichardYow ; senator ; KevinBryant ; McMasters
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Sent: Sun, Oct 14, 2018 10:14 am

Subject: Fiscally Responsible / Humane Solutions for SCDC

Dear Elected Officials,

There is so much in life that we cannot control. This statement is even more true for those living in prison. Nevertheless, despite the extreme restrictions and limitations, some inmates at McCormick Correctional Institution are finding ways to take control of a piece of their lives in the most positive way.

The Character Based Unit (CBU) program began at Perry Correctional Institution, before being implemented at McCormick Correctional Institution. This model benefits inmates, the South Carolina Department of Corrections, and citizens of South Carolina alike by encouraging rehabilitation while teaching the life skills needed to succeed, both throughout incarceration as well as post-incarceration, as the inmates try to reintegrate into South Carolina communities. The program fosters personal development by teaching and reinforcing pro-social values, attitudes, thinking, and behavior through peer to peer accountability. Inmates are held to a higher standard of conduct, behavior, and performance by requiring the inmates to take classes, hold jobs, and abide by strict standards of behavior which results in a positive atmosphere in a reward-based system.

The inmates who have earned the privilege of being housed in the McCormick CBU develop, schedule, teach, and monitor classes on various subjects. They have over 50 classes with a wide range of subjects including such things as conflict resolution, public speaking, money management, creative writing, and memory enhancement. In addition to offering positive programs in their own dorm, the residents of the CBU at McCormick have initiated an outreach to other dorms at the facility, including the medical unit, that have allowed the CBU participants to mentor and encourage other inmates to strive to meet the standards necessary to eventually join the program.

Through the generosity of an Anderson County bible study group, six computers have been made available to inmates of the McCormick CBU. Since receiving them, the inmates are evaluating levels of competency in order to develop classes' specific to inmates' individual ability levels. Currently CBU residents are utilizing this opportunity to positively impact fellow inmates by teaching basic computer skills to those who never had the opportunity to even so much as turn on a computer prior to their incarcerations, as well as more advanced training that will help the inmates contribute to society post-release, such as a class in coding. All of the classes are either taught by inmates with greater computer literacy or are self-taught by inmates eager to improve their lives and the lives of those around them. As a result of the generosity of caring individuals like the donors, the computers are providing an opportunity for inmates to develop marketable skills, feel valued, and keep their minds engaged, both while re-paying their debt to

society and upon their eventual releases.

Following the riot at Lee Correctional on April 15th the entire McCormick Correctional Institution facility was on full lock down. While much of the facility is still on lock down, the inmates who reside in the CBU were restored to partial lockdown after 26 days. This disparate treatment was made possible, in no small part, because many of the inmates who reside in the CBU hold jobs that help the facility to function. Currently most work until 3pm then have until 6 pm to address other needs such as showers, preparing food, and calling home. Even with the limited free time now available, the program is thriving as they work to fit in their classes.

I appeal to you to visit the CBU at McCormick to learn about the program first hand. The inmates are proud of what they are accomplishing and would love to have those in positions of influence see the positive changes that inmates are making with little or no resources from the state. Through donations, we have been able to provide books, study materials and the recently acquired computer equipment. A dorm newsletter was also started to recognize accomplishments, inform inmates of opportunities and provide a sense of community.

In many ways what the inmates are doing with permission of the staff to improve conditions and address problems in the CBU has been more effective than the expensive increased security measures being applied around the state. This is not to criticize the efforts of the South Carolina Legislatures or their tax-paying constituents, but rather to highlight a cash-flow positive alternative to the long running practice seen nationwide of locking up prisoners and throwing away the keys, with little to no focus on rehabilitation.

There is a bill that will be introduced next session to allow mandatory minimum sentences to be reduced from 85 to 65 percent contingent upon good behavior. By committing to higher standards of conduct and self-improvement, inmates would have an opportunity to earn reductions in their sentences. This change would provide an incentive and reward for those who are striving to better themselves. Mostly it would provide hope and encouragement to inmates and their families while adhering to the mission of the South Carolina Department of Corrections which is: *Safety--we will protect the public, our employees, and our inmates. Service--we will provide rehabilitation and self-improvement opportunities for inmates. Stewardship--we will promote professional excellence, fiscal responsibility, and self-sufficiency.*

To be productive and meet these goals of the Department's mission, a paradigm shift is needed now more than ever. It is imperative that the "status quo," a system that in many respects is purely punitive, be re-imagined more like the CBU in providing a path toward rehabilitation through correcting behavior and encouraging self-improvement.

Please support this effort with your actions in voting in support of the proposed revision to the statute. This is not a plea just to improve the lives of the inmates that fill our prisons well beyond their intended capacities; rather, this is a plea to improve the lives of every citizen in the state of South Carolina, each of whom benefits from a system that maximizes the State's return on its very expensive investment in housing its

incarcerated population. Your empathy and action will be greatly appreciated and benefit all.

In closing we would like to know if there is anything we can do to support and promote the bill in the upcoming session? If there is anything that we – family, friends and inmates can do to support your efforts, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Laurie McDermott

My son, Riley McDermott is serving an 18-year sentence at a maximum-security facility for first time DUI resulting in fatality. At his sentencing hearing his Judge, Cordell Maddox, challenged him to make a difference. As a former collegiate athlete and coach, he has tried to reach out to schools and student athletes on the dangers of drinking and driving. He works tirelessly with only personal satisfaction to reward his efforts to effect positive change for his fellow inmates.