



March 25, 2021

RE: HF 2349 – The Minnesota Rehabilitation and Reinvestment Act

Dear Members of the House Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Committee:

The Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties (MACCAC) represents the 34 Minnesota counties that have chosen to provide probation and supervised release supervision under the Community Corrections Act. MACCAC counties provide the supervision the majority of individuals released from state correctional facilities.

On behalf of MACCAC, we thank you for considering HF 2349, the Minnesota Rehabilitation and Reinvestment Act. MACCAC encourages the legislature to consider and discuss legislation that incentivizes programming for incarcerated individuals. It is much more likely that an individual will succeed in the community and be able to reduce contact with the criminal justice system if they receive programming in prison that transitions fluidly into community services and supervision.

Though we do not yet have a position on this bill, we believe it is time to focus on the types of initiatives proposed in this bill, in addition to furthering the dialogue surrounding the future of prison and community supervision in Minnesota. *Providing meaningful programming and interventions that reduce recidivism should be a core component of Minnesota's criminal justice system.*

We hope to work with Representative Becker-Finn and other members of the legislature as this bill moves forward and the language is revised.

Should you have any questions about our thoughts or concerns about the bill, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at cstark@mncounties.org.

Sincerely,

Carli E. Stark, Executive Director
Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties



Friday, March 26, 2021

Dear Members of the House Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Committee,

On behalf of Americans for Prosperity activists across Minnesota, I am writing today to call your attention to the Minnesota Rehabilitation and Reinvestment Act (HF2349) and urge you to support the bill. This bill will both ensure individuals exiting our state's prison system can secure a second chance and increase public safety in our communities.

Improving Public Safety in Minnesota

At Americans for Prosperity, we believe an effective criminal justice system protects people and preserves public safety, respects human dignity, and removes barriers to opportunity for people seeking a second chance. A core function of our justice system is imposing accountability, but it should be done in a manner that ensures those being held accountable achieve restoration and never return to our justice system. To do this we must seek to incentivize – rather than inhibit – the success of those who have been held accountable through incarceration or community supervision.

Our state has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the country but [almost 40%](#) of those exiting our state prisons will be convicted of another felony in just three years. This rate has stayed [relatively consistent](#) over the past decade and it is time we do more to ensure increased public safety across Minnesota. We cannot keep doing the same thing and expect a different result. Allowing and supporting innovation in the Department of Corrections can help us achieve better results and build upon our reputation as a leader in innovative, evidence-based corrections nationwide. We can rely on the experience of other states and a large body of credible research to craft innovations that work in the unique context of Minnesota.

Innovations in The Rehabilitation and Reinvestment Act

Our goals in Minnesota should be to ensure individuals exiting our justice system do so with the skills, character, and practical knowledge necessary for them to be successful upon reintegration into their community. This can be achieved by creating a constructive culture in our state prison and community supervision programs. By incentivizing participation in proven in-prison programs and compliance with community supervision conditions, our state can take another step towards creating that constructive culture.

The Rehabilitation and Reinvestment Act will implement the following reforms in the state's justice system:

1. Expand the types of evidence-based programming required in the state's prison system, including substance abuse treatment, sexual offender treatment, and career training.
2. Authorize the creation of a needs assessment tool to identify the treatment and programming needs and create individualized program plans for everyone in the state's prisons.
3. Incentivize the completion of individualized program plans by allowing certain individuals to earn release credits that will be applied to early release to community supervision.

Through broad-based grassroots outreach, *Americans for Prosperity (AFP)* is driving long-term solutions to the country's biggest problems. AFP activists engage friends and neighbors on key issues and encourage them to take an active role in building a culture of mutual benefit, where people succeed by helping one another. AFP recruits and unites activists in 35 states behind a common goal of advancing policies that will help people improve their lives.

4. Incentivize compliance with each individual's community supervision conditions by allowing them to be placed on inactive supervision for the remainder of their sentence.
5. Ensure victim notification and input before any individual is released to community supervision on account of any release credits they earn by fulfilling their program plan.
6. Authorizing the reinvestment of 75% of resulting savings by the Department of Corrections into victim services, improving community supervision, and evidence-based prison programming.

These innovations are based upon the success of similar programs in other states that have received bipartisan support. States like [Iowa](#), [North Carolina](#), [Oregon](#), and [Washington](#) have robust earned time credit programs in their prison systems that have been found to reduce recidivism, correctional spending, and prison populations. Compliance credit policies for those on community supervision have also been adopted in states like [Louisiana](#) and [Missouri](#) with great outcomes. In Missouri, [more than 36,000](#) individuals successfully reduced their supervision term by an average of [14 months](#) without any impact of recidivism or public safety.

Improvements to Strengthen Impact of Reforms

Given our experience and research on similar programs in other states and on the federal level, Americans for Prosperity is proud to support a bill that will improve public safety and second chances for those currently in our state's justice system. There are still ways that this bill can and should be improved. We are currently discussing these recommendations with key stakeholders to ensure these reforms achieve their maximum impact in a way that is transparent, fair, and objective. We believe the legislature should make the following changes before sending the bill to Governor Walz:

1. Require external validation and regular revalidation of the needs assessment tool based on the data collected, outcomes of use, and the latest research and public reports on these validations.
2. Provide some clarity on the actual rate of earning incentive credits in statute so the impact of the incentives is maximized by ensuring eligible individuals have clarity about the benefit they will accrue by completing programs. This will also ensure the legislature's intent is properly implemented by the Department of Corrections.
3. Clarify that incentive credits can be earned for in-prison programming provided by community-based groups that have been found to reduce recidivism or help individuals be successful during reentry.
4. Require that all reports on the impact and outcomes of these programs are published for public analysis and feedback. This will ensure the Department of Corrections is held accountable for the implementation and future success of these programs.

Thank you for your time and attention on these important issues. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or would like to discuss these issues further.

Sincerely,



Jason Flohrs
State Director
Americans for Prosperity - Minnesota



Written Testimony to MN House Public Safety & Criminal Justice Reform
Committee re HF2349, "Rehabilitation & Reinvestment Act"

March 25, 2021

Dear Chair Mariani & Members of the Committee:

ISAI AH is a statewide organization of over 200 congregations, 30 mosques, 500 childcare centers, and dozens of barber shops in Minnesota. Our mission is to enable people to organize for racial, social and economic justice, and build a democracy that respects every person's dignity and a caring economy where everyone can thrive. We are writing in support of HF2349, the Minnesota Rehabilitation & Reinvestment Act, with some qualifications.

As a broad organization of people of faith that has also expanded beyond that, the thing that binds us together is the deep belief in the power of personal transformation through public, collective action. Every human being has dignity, and every one is capable of redemption. No person should be forever judged by their worst act, or even set of acts especially over a period of youth.

No matter where we live or what we look like, every Minnesotan deserves to live their lives in safety. Unfortunately those that bear the brunt of both crime as well as state punishment for crimes are disproportionately Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

We laud the goals of the Rehabilitation & Reinvestment Act as a positive step forward to increase public safety and re-align policies to better enable pro-social transformational change.

While we support the bill, we are concerned about the proposed exemption list. In our view, the exemption list basically front loads decisions about safety and community reintegration with no consideration of the individual or the true value of continued imprisonment. In particular, the exemptions skew towards crimes with the longest sentences. For example, someone sentenced to 30 or 40 years at say age 25 should have the opportunity to earn release as they enter middle age when statistics show the chance of re-offense drops drastically. Indeterminate sentencing is a good thing precisely for its recognition of personal change and substantially reduced public safety risk as the convicted person ages. There's no logic behind saying that's true for some crimes and not others.

Further, we feel that any many of the exemptions, especially that based on a "gang" crime will create unequal opportunity to use this program and could further racial disparities. The gang panic of the 1980's and 1990's was part of the fuel that drove racial inequality in our criminal justice system. Yet in a 1991 article "a close examination shows that most killings classified as gang-related stemmed more from personal feuds than gang rivalry." (article attached) We hope the legislature will do more to unwind, and not deepen, racial inequities of our past in our public policy. We hope you will consider eliminating the exclusions in the bill.

We truly appreciate the intent of HF 2349, the Minnesota Rehabilitation & Reinvestment Act and feel that it is strong, worthwhile step in the right direction.

Sincerely,

Lars Negstad, Policy Director, ISAI AH
Brian Fullman, Lead Organizer, Barbershops & Black Congregations Cooperative

Matthew Emerson HF2349 Paul Schnell March 24th 2021

After being sentenced to a prison term of 9.5 years or 114 months. I understand the gravity of incarceration long term. When I arrived, I decided to do everything I could to change. which involved paying out of pocket for college classes, Volunteering in the church, and making it to work every day whether the pay was 12.5 cents an hour or two dollars an hour.

I did not know about work ethics, I did not know how much it meant to other prisoners and the community to volunteer inside, and I didn't know what the benefits were going to be when I started college classes.

Now, I do though. Now I know that getting up and working pays off. I know that being smart with my time pays dividends and so does the time I gave to the Lord and the people who were lost coming back.

This idea HF 2349 resonates with me. When I think back to my first attendance at a father support group created by lifers inside. I listened to the stories of the men in a circle about there experiences with being fathers and when the talking piece came to me... I said, "I wish I had just one of these meetings when I was 17 a new father with no mentor... my whole life would be different."

The time I spent in the Department of corrections truly elevated me in life. And gave me a chance to work on myself. I found a space to surround myself with mentors who did not lie.

This bill will give anyone in this State the same opportunity I had.

Following the Direction of the New Democratic Administration, this will give people who don't have the family support, money, or comprehension afforded to me, the opportunity for early release that I got... I ended my stay with three years inn, An intense boot camp, and a year of house arrest and am thankful and proud of who I am today.

When I talk about this proposal this makes sense...

Why would we as a community allow the current disadvantaging negligence to continue.

Empirically we:

Send someone to jail for example, 15 years, wait until the 14.5 mark before we put them in a treatment for drugs and alcohol.

With this bill we will have them do the treatment right away! With the purpose of making them able to take the values from that treatment and share those values with other prisoners for the rest of the time.

This is common sense reform. A way to reduce the number of people in prison. Please consider this legislation. So the individual can fix what got them there.

Help communities get their sons and daughters home faster. With better skills to go out and work and parent better.

This keeps the streets safe and provides more accountability to at risk youth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.