



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