

February 25, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

For over 50 years, Volunteers of America Minnesota has provided services to help justice impacted individuals successfully transition from prison to a productive life in the community. Services include residential reentry centers and work-release programs, as well as one of the state's longest standing and most successful transitional mentoring programs, Amicus, for those leaving incarceration. Our work in Community Justice focuses on building successful lives and stronger communities through annually helping over 2,000 women and men as they overcome the challenges and obstacles that a criminal record imposes. VOA of MN's services offer a support network that instills hope and imparts practical skills and strategies that are evidenced- based, trauma-informed, community-driven, and gender/culturally responsive.

Today, we are writing in support of **HF553**. We are aware that legislators from the Minnesota House and Senate have been working on this important compromise, and we thank them for their leadership. It is our understanding that HF553 will strengthen the reentry process and extend opportunities to expand efforts to ensure all people have base information needed to successfully transition from prison to a productive life in the community.

When individuals are released from incarceration, many face significant challenges looking for employment, housing, positive connections in the community, and access to medical care and medication. Barriers to employment, combined with overt discrimination, have created a housing crisis for individuals returning to community from prison. It is estimated that formerly incarcerated people are almost 10 times more likely to be homeless than the general public. Moreover, justice impacted individuals have a higher prevalence of behavioral health disorders and chronic and infectious diseases than the general population.

Volunteers of America Minnesota see firsthand the impact that barriers to reentry can cause on individuals, families, and the community as a whole. People reentering society after incarceration should not be forced to face insurmountable barriers leave individuals so vulnerable to failure and return to incarceration.

Your support of **HF553** is needed and appreciated, and its passage will promote efforts to address collateral consequences and build paths that lead formerly incarcerated individuals to better outcomes: paths that will take them – and their communities – to better places.

Thank you for your leadership and service. Please do not hesitate to contact me at Julie.Manworren@voamn.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Julie Manworren, President and CEO
952.945.4004



AMERICAN INDIAN OIC

February 24, 2021

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to express American Indian OIC's support for House File 553/Senate File 519 because we believe it will help remove obstacles that former inmates often find as they search for work.

American Indian OIC provides career education and job search support services to men and women exiting incarceration and reentering the community. As such, we have a keen understanding of the challenges faced by Minnesotans working to move forward from their criminal record.

One of the greatest and often-overlooked barriers to successful community reentry is the procurement of state identification. Identification gives those leaving incarceration better access to housing, transportation, education, and employment. Our organization believes this bill will expedite the ID procurement process and allow these individuals more time to focus on their job search and career goals.

We also see the need for those leaving incarceration to have improved access to medication, better understanding of their rights to expungement and voting, and stronger homeless services. This bill addresses all three of those problems, clearing a smoother path in what is a pivotal time for former inmates.

Successful community reentry is integral to preventing recidivism and creating greater public safety. This bill also will have a positive impact on equity in Minnesota, a state where Native Americans are 12 times more likely than Caucasians to experience incarceration.

American Indian OIC encourages your urgent support and adoption of this legislation because it will improve employment and improve lives.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joe Hobot
President & CEO
American Indian OIC





Re: HF553/SF519

To whom it may concern:

It is with great enthusiasm that, on behalf of Avivo, I write in support of HF553/SF519. As the state's largest provider of services for the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), as well as the recipient of numerous state and federal grants designed to advance the self-sufficiency of those receiving services, we stand in solidarity with our community members who would benefit from this legislation.

We are a Minnesota nonprofit with sixty years of history providing social services to our most marginalized community members and as such, we understand the importance of "setting people up for success upon reentry into the community." The provisions in this bill are designed to do this—ensuring proper ID; contributing to the health and wellness of clients; providing vital information; and, promoting the safe and stable housing of returning citizens.

We know what happens when people leave prison with supports in place to be successful; we also know that not everyone who reenters our communities has what they need to thrive on day one of their return. We want to continue to be part of the solution around reentry, and we believe this bill adds important supports and processes that promote the success of returning citizens. We celebrate positive life stories every day—when clients reach recovery milestones, find permanent housing, and make significant progress toward self-sufficiency. We look forward to seeing the meaningful impact this bill will have on assisting even more community members thrive, achieve their dreams, and fulfill their potential.

Sincerely,

James R. Verhoye Ph.D.

James R. Verhoye, Ph.D.
Director, Avivo Institute of Career and Technical Education
jim.verhoye@avivomn.org
612-752-8138



Date: February 24, 2021
To: Whom It May Concern
From: EMERGE Community Development
Re: Reentry bill HF 553/SF 519

EMERGE Community Development would like to present our strong support for HF553/SF 519 presented by Senator Osmek, Rep. Koegel, and the Minnesota Dept. of Corrections to improve support for returning citizens in Minnesota. EMERGE as an agency works with large numbers of citizens returning home post-incarceration, supporting them with career training, employment and other supports as they resume their lives. This bill will greatly support the success of the people we serve.

This bill would provide an acceptable secondary ID document for people being released from incarceration in the event that a State ID cannot be arranged. When participants lack a valid ID, it becomes nearly impossible for them to secure a job, slowing the critical first step of employment and greatly increasing risk of recidivism. It also affects access to training, housing, transportation, and other critical basic needs. This bill also addresses access to medication and healthcare, another critical need.

As one example I would like to share the story of Marcus (not his real name). Marcus came to EMERGE in February 2020 just out of prison, full of optimism and with his heart set on getting his CDL and becoming a truck driver. Despite doing everything right, due to COVID-19 he experienced months of delays that kept him waiting until July for critical identification paperwork necessary to begin his training. Then his training provider suddenly closed and he to shift trucking schools in the pandemic. As of October, he still had not been able to complete training and his coach had lost touch and could not get him to call her back. Eventually we discovered the repeated frustration combined with the stresses of the pandemic had led to chemical dependency relapse. We were able to connect Marcus to treatment, and he is now back in recovery and finally resumed his CDL training in January.

For Marcus, the simple lack of correct identification contributed to setting him back almost a full year in his reentry process. If he had not been able to access the healthcare he needed, it could have been far worse.

We also strongly support the requirement that the DOC track homelessness for people releasing from facilities and supervision, and find creative ways to mitigate homelessness. A former EMERGE employee shared a story of being released from incarceration directly to homelessness and spending his first winter out of prison living in a \$600 used car, keeping warm by parking between idling semi-trucks at a rest stop, and showering at a Holiday before driving to work. While his release was several years ago, we have people we work with everyday who we know or suspect to be homeless or at significant risk. We have a staff person whose job includes carefully searching our recycling business that offers transitional jobs to returning citizens to make sure no employees are hiding in waste recycling plant overnight rather than be on the streets.

The provisions offered in this bill are critical to the success of our returning citizens. Individuals who have made mistakes and paid their debt to society need and deserve to leave incarceration with at least the basic ability to get jobs, housing, healthcare and food. Anything less is setting them up for failure, and represents a foundational failure of our state to protect all our citizens and communities.

Thank you for supporting this bill and ensuring a fair and safe release from incarceration process for everyone.

HENNEPIN COUNTY

MINNESOTA

February 24, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of SF 519/ HF 553, particularly section two. This section describes innovations critical to the successful re-entry of people to our Minnesota community. In Hennepin, we have partnered with the Department of Corrections to pilot new practices aligned with the bill with much success. Success means our supervised population can find work more easily, seek treatment services to meet their on-going rehabilitative goals more quickly, and transition health needs more seamlessly. This, in turn, makes our community safer. The tenets of this bill represent sound correctional practice, so much so that we incorporated similar efforts locally through the Transition from Jail to Community initiative in our Adult Corrections Facility.

The practices represented should be offered to all people in prison, regardless of length of prison term or release violator status. We look forward to working with the authors to ensure alignment of the full bill with county best practices.

Sincerely,



Julie Rud
Field Services Area Director



**NORTHWEST INDIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

February 24th, 2021

To Whom it May Concern:

The Northwest Indian Community Development Center has been a long standing partner with the Minnesota Department of Corrections to enhance equity, coordinated care, and comprehensive support services for community members returning home from jail/prison. This partnership has been established due to the center's community reputation and provider of the Ombishkaa program. The Ombishkaa Initiative includes providing comprehensive services, information and resources that support the stability of Indigenous men and women who have experienced incarceration. The Ombishkaa team welcomes and transitions in new and current community members in the program to help them acclimate back home and to the community.

NWICDC is in full support of the measures proposed by the DOC. As an essential community service, our community members and experiences teach us that successful reintegration starts within prison/jail facility which includes but is not limited to the following outlined in the proposal submitted by the DOC:

- The ability for individuals to access a second form of state identification
- The expansion of home medications and prescriptions for non-narcotic medications
- The provision of transparent information including expungement, voting rights, outstanding fines and fees for all individuals upon release
- Requirements for DOC to track homelessness for people releasing from facilities and supervision, and finding creative ways to mitigate homelessness

The Northwest Indian Community Development Center is proud to offer their support to the Department of Corrections in advancing measures that lead to successful reentry, reintegration, and recidivism. NWICDC is a committed partner and will continue to engage in meaningful and purposeful dialogue with the DOC. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at rhonda.conn@nwicdc.org or 218-759-2022.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Rhonda Conn
A59ACA19857D4A8...

Rhonda Conn

Acting Executive Director



February 25, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

The Power of People Leadership Institute is a 16-year-old organization whose work inside of the Minnesota state correctional facilities over that period of time has been unmatched, recognize the importance of supporting HF553/SF519.

Why you ask? For years we have had to struggle with our returnees who don't have the necessary identification documents like a state ID or Social Security card, which means that they must basically start from absolute scratch, making it very difficult to transition to a reentry that is winnable.

Second, many of our men who have come home over the last several years has been on medication during their time inside of the institution and are sometimes caught off guard with the euphoria of being released and don't make contact quick enough with medical providers to make the medication transition a smooth one.

Third, homelessness plagues our country for a variety of reasons and it severely impacts our returnees. For those who are released after having been incarcerated for long periods of time, it's only humane for us as Minnesotans to allow these men and women to transition into a safe place at least for a time while that person gets his or her druthers to start moving around.

For these reasons and others, The Power People and Leadership Institute supports the Minnesota State Department of Corrections in the passing of HF553/SF519.

Thank you

Sincerely,
Brother Shane Price & Dr. Verna Cornelia Price
Co-Founders, The Power of People Leadership Institute



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
1931 West Broadway, Suite 101
Minneapolis, MN 55411
(612) 287-1600
www.rseden.org

February 24, 2021

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

I am writing to you on behalf of RS EDEN to support HF 553 and companion S.F 519 – Assistance to Inmates (as amended by the A-2 amendment).

This bill will help reduce the barriers many individuals encounter when they return to the community from prison. Identification documents and photo identification are fundamental to people in securing employment, housing, banking, and accessing services. Individuals who have been incarcerated often have lost their identification, and the only form of identification they have is their prison ID.

This bill also addresses and expands the importance of continuity of health care and prescription medication the day clients leave the institution. Individuals will also leave the institution with information about how to access SNAP benefits, where the local work force centers in their communities are, basic information on their voting rights and expungement. Additionally, the Department of Corrections will track data on individuals leaving the institution homeless or become homeless while under supervision and have a plan to mitigate homelessness in the future.

RS EDEN operates three residential community reentry facilities in St. Paul, MN. We contract with the Minnesota Department of Corrections to provide reentry services for men and women on work release and intensive supervised release status. Our programs have multiple clients who come into our facilities without any form of identification. Case managers work with clients to help them secure important documents and identification, however the process can take up to 45 days. Allowing individuals to utilize their prison identification card as a secondary document for proof of identity would greatly reduce the time individuals spend on seeking identification and allowing them to gain employment, save money and secure permanent housing in a timely manner.

Many clients who enter our programs are on prescription medications for a medical or mental health condition. Clients have come into our programs with limited supply of medication (5 days) and one prescription for a 30-day supply of medication. If insurance is not activated, the client is left without medication and a doctor to fill the prescription. This bill will ensure clients will have enough medication for one month, plus two 30-day prescriptions which ultimately gives time for medical insurance to be activated and the client will maintain continuous medical and behavioral health care.

This bill is a step toward individuals having a successful transition into the community by providing basic and necessary assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "LuAnne Buck".

LuAnne Buck
Division Director of Reentry Services



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
1931 West Broadway, Suite 101
Minneapolis, MN 55411
(612) 287-1600
www.rseden.org

February 24, 2021

Dear Members of the Finance and Transportation Policy Committee

I am writing to you on behalf of RS EDEN to support S.F. No. 519 – Assistance to Inmates (as amended by the A-2 amendment).

This bill will help reduce the barriers many individuals encounter when they return to the community from prison. Identification documents and photo identification are fundamental to people in securing employment, housing, banking, and accessing services. Individuals who have been incarcerated often have lost their identification, and the only form of identification they have is their prison ID.

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This bill is a step toward individuals having a successful transition into the community by providing basic and necessary assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "LuAnne Buck".

LuAnne Buck
Division Director of Reentry Services

February 25, 2021

Re: **Support for SF 519 (with amendments)**

To our Legislative Leaders:

I am a Vice President for Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge. I am a psychologist and a 35-year Corrections professional. I have been an executive leader in implementing evidence-based practices (the “What Works” research) throughout the State during the course of my career. I have been honored to work with this Administration and the prior Administration on the State Initiatives to Reduce Recidivism. The research on the reforms that have been implemented by the Legislature and these Administrations demonstrates dramatic reductions in recidivism and “smart justice” approaches that have also reduced incarceration without compromising short-term public safety and while enhancing long-term public safety.

The Legislature has given bi-partisan support to a series of these reforms in both legislative bodies. I appreciate and admire your leadership in advancing Criminal Justice reforms.

It is deeply satisfying to see the Department of Corrections asking for your continued leadership to codify these evidence based practices for release, reentry, and community reintegration in SF 519 (with recommended amendments). The bridge of effective transitional services and supports for people who are incarcerated has been seriously deficient in Minnesota. SF 519 goes a long way to construct the bridge from prison to community based treatment, resources and supports.

I think that I can speak with confidence for the Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery field when I say that we stand ready to lend our resources to support people who are incarcerated with telehealth, direct access, mobile assessment, transportation, access to benefits, treatment, peer support and treatment coordination (all of which have all been provided for by the Legislature’s behavioral health services reforms) and to effectively work with the three correctional delivery systems to remove unnecessary barriers to behavioral health services.

Please let me know if you would like me to provide testimony to or consultation on SF 519 and companion bills.

Respectfully submitted,



Timothy B. Walsh, M.A., L.P.; DPA

Vice President

Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge

651-242-6293

Tim.Walsh@mntc.org