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To: Testimony <testimony@leg.state.vt.us>
Subject: POSSIBLE SPAM: Proposal 2. Public comment

January 19, 2022

Madame Chair and Members of the House Government Operations Committee:

My name is Joey Corcoran and I'm a resident of Burlington.

I am here to strongly recommend that you pass Prop. 2 to prohibit slavery and indentured servitude in the state's Constitution. It seems like a no-brainer, right? As you probably know Colorado, Utah and Nebraska have already made similar amendments to their constitutions and it looks like a number of other states will follow.

What I found particularly persuasive as a reason for this is to put an end to the exploitation of inmates in correctional facilities who in many cases are used as free or cheap labor. I don't know if that is happening at the Tallahatchie County Correctional Facility in Mississippi where a number of VT inmates continue to be housed. But it is a practice that occurs around the country that includes using prisoners as forced labor for work as varied as manufacturing to cleaning up man-made and natural disasters. A 2021 article by Laura Appleman, J.D.* reports that during COVID-19, inmates were pressed into not only manufacturing protective equipment but digging mass graves for those who died of the virus.

Without the clarity of abolishing slavery and indentured servitude altogether, I can imagine that if push came to shove, it could be tempting for Vermont to use inmate labor to address climate change disasters that might befall the state in the future. California is doing that now. We need to make clear where VT stands on human rights and that we are not perpetuating the exploitation of human beings who happen to be incarcerated as a way to save the state money.

Please pass Prop. 2.

Thank you.

* Appleman, Laura I, Bloody Lucre: Carceral Labor and Prison Profit (August 13, 2021). Wisconsin Law Review, Vol. 2022, No. 3, 2022 Forthcoming, Available at SSRN:
<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3942151> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3942151>