

Today I am representing families of incarcerated people. I also have been an advocate since my husband was incarcerated, nearly ten years ago. I worked with Rep. Suzi Wizowaty when she began VCJR, and was on their board of directors till up until Tom Dalton becoming the director.

My husband is one of the people that will lose earned good time if S.18 goes through. He has 7.5 years left to his sentence: he'd have the potential to shorten that by a year and a half with good time. While incarcerated, he has done volunteer work as the head librarian, and is also working as a coach in the Open Ears program. When released, he would like to mentor formerly incarcerated people who may be more at risk to reoffend. This is his way to make amends.

Crime victims prefer prevention over punishment Studies have shown that victims would rather resources go into prevention than long prison sentences. Funds that are saved from letting low-risk people in this category earn good time can be spent on education, drug and alcohol addiction treatment, mental health -- all things that have been shown to be a factor in crime.

<https://allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/Crime%20Survivors%20Speak%20Report.pdf>

More than half of the incarcerated population will be left out of earned good time if this bill passes The DOC Population report at the end of 2020 indicates that roughly 800 of the slightly less than 1300 incarcerated people will be left out of good time.

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/WorkGroups/House%20Corrections%20and%20Institutions/Department%20of%20Corrections/W~Jessica%20King-Mohr~Inmate%20Population%20Report~1-20-2021.pdf>

Leaving violent offenders out of criminal justice reforms limits its effectiveness.

Nationwide, people locked up for violent offenses are, as in Vermont, by far the largest group. The goal of criminal justice reform is to limit the use of prison while at the same time keeping communities safe. The goal of the DOC is to support inmates in rehabilitation and in becoming better citizens. Part of that support might be allowing those serving time for violent acts to prove themselves as good citizens while behind bars, and therefore worthy to join the rest of us again.

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/violence.html>

Earned good time doesn't automatically mean a person is released when he or she reaches their minimum minus good time earned. It means that they may be considered for parole. The parole board's job is to release only low-risk people. The people that are in this group have been in prison long enough for DOC to know them.

Those incarcerated for murder and other violent crimes are the least likely to reoffend, and even less likely to be incarcerated for the same crime. I know this to be true of my husband, and there are exceptions to everything, but I believe it to be true for most of those incarcerated in Vermont. Telling them that they are not worthy to earn good time is to tell them that we believe them incapable of changing and bettering themselves.

I believe the Justice Reinvestment Committee understood what they were doing when they recommended that all incarcerated people be eligible for good time. They knew that the small reduction of time spent in prison will have a variety of benefits: the ability to reinvest in crime prevention, a better culture inside the facilities, and overall a better outcome and a safer state.

Award-winning journalist Nancy Mullane said her research has taught her that there are some convicted killers who “are back out in society and have so much to teach us about rehabilitation, redemption and about really screwing up in your life - massively - and then what it takes to come back, what it takes to be a person again and give back to society.”

“People can change,” she said.

Mullane said she was able to determine that 988 convicted murderers were released from prisons in California over a 20 year period. Out of those 988, she said 1 percent were arrested for new crimes, and 10 percent were arrested for violating parole. She found none of the 988 were rearrested for murder, and none went back to prison over the 20 year period she examined.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/once-a-criminal-always-a-criminal/>

<http://www.lifeaftermurder.com/>

Each of these categories of crimes represent a human being. It is very possible that some of these people might not be ready to be released at their good time date (if they had one) and they might not be ready to be released at their minimum. But this is hardly true of all of them. Please consider letting the good time part of Act 148 continue as written.

--

**Meg McCarthy**

Design for Everything

[megmccarthy.com](http://megmccarthy.com)