



## House Judiciary Committee Re: SB 195 Family Advisory Board Bill

12/2/2020

Good Morning and thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this incredibly important topic.

My name is Pete Letkemann. I chair the current "voluntary" Family Advisory Board to MDOC and am the Vice President of Citizens for Prison Reform. But, most importantly, I am the father of a prisoner currently incarcerated with the MDOC. My son Alex is now into his 13th year of a 20-year minimum.

Two words I would use to describe the level of communication I have witnessed in my years on the Family Advisory Board would be "unprecedented" and "effective". Through this board we are seeing a broader base of understanding between the Department and the loved ones of those inside. This understanding has a real, positive effect on family connectedness, and efficiency within the department. Families learn how to better advocate for their loved ones, and the MDOC reaps the benefit of fewer inquiries or misunderstandings due to a better educated public.

We are all pushing in the same direction - toward positive outcomes for those inside. And study after study has shown that positive relationships with a strong support circle outside is key to successful reentry AND a safer environment inside for all.

I won't list all the positive results already produced by this relationship between families and the department, but rather I want to focus on what should be obvious. And that is this; an open conduit for communication between these two groups can never be considered a bad thing. Which brings us to the issue at hand today. Put plainly, I want the spirit of cooperation I feel with today's board to be equally as evident 20 years from now when an unnamed administration is in power, and families on the outside struggle to somehow turn terrible circumstances into a positive outcome. Hopefully cementing the structure of this board into law will ensure that the spirit of this current cooperation will live on through future administrations.

I thank you for your time.

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