



Date:

Address:

Dear Representative _____:

On February 13th, at 11:00 a.m., in the Capitol Rotunda, over 1,000 ex-offenders, their family members and supporters of justice system reform will come together to highlight the importance second chances. This effort is being lead by a consortium of non-profit leaders, justice system advocates and concerned citizens.

There are currently 155,000 Minnesota adults under some form of correctional supervision; 142,000 on probation, 4,200 on some level of supervised release, and 9,100 in prison. And there are at least as many with a criminal record who have satisfied all the requirements of their sentence. This equates to one in every sixteen Minnesotans having the stigma of a conviction they must overcome to qualify for housing, employment and student loans, among other things.

Legislatively we have created nearly 200 collateral sanctions over and above the penalties associated with a conviction. They include restrictions from certain careers, licenses and housing options and they limit a person's ability to access education. Over the course of years, these sanctions have made it nearly impossible for individuals to over-come past mistakes. As their worlds increasingly circumscribed their inability to become productive members of society affects children, families and communities and jeopardizes public safety. These actions, and others, negatively impact not just the offender, but the offenders family, and by extension, future generations. The fact that the poor, and people of color, are extremely overrepresented, suggests that we are potentially contributing to the evolution of permanently disenfranchised communities. We need pragmatic approaches to public safety that are rational, sustainable and cost-effective.

The prison population is five times larger than it was a scant 25 years ago. Yet during that same time period, the overall population of the state grew by just 27%. Public safety requires that we find an effective way to help people overcome the challenges they have to change their lives. But equally important is developing a process to recognize that change and minimize the effects of past behavior on future productiveness and integration. A person who, because of stigma, cannot find employment or housing, and who isn't afraid of incarceration, is problematic for us all.

I am asking that you make yourself available to speak with constituents during the "Second Chance Day on the Hill" on February 13th, 2008. It is time for us to come together and make the all too often invisible problems facing individuals with criminal records visible. Our current policies and practices are neither sustainable or effective.

For further information on the core principles I support please visit www.employexoffenders.org.

I thank you for taking the time to consider the importance of making "second chances" a reality for all.

Sincerely,