

# WA COALITION FOR PRISON REFORM

*We are a coalition of family members, formerly incarcerated individuals, and nonprofit members with concerns about current sentencing laws and the practices of the Washington Department of Corrections (DOC).*

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## **WE SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PROPOSED LEGISLATION OF THE 2020 SESSION:**

### **SB 5819**

We support a bill to create a review process for incarcerated individuals sentenced to life without parole and de facto life without parole. A post-conviction review board established by SB 5819 would affirm that incarcerated individuals are capable of rehabilitation and would align our state's sentencing practices and penological objectives with best practices worldwide.

### **SB 6203**

We support a bill to amend the language of RCW 72.09.010—which presents the legislative intent of corrections—in order to humanize incarcerated individuals and reaffirm the State's commitment to evidence-based approaches to public safety and rehabilitation.

### **HB 2292 AND COMPANION BILL SB 6228**

Currently, voting rights are provisionally restored to Washington citizens who have experienced incarceration. We support a bill to automatically restore the voting rights of all formerly incarcerated individuals upon release.

### **SB 6476 WITH REGARD TO IMMEDIATE FAMILY**

We support a bill to amend the language of RCW 72.09.015. This bill aims to expand the definition of immediate family to include aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and the immediate family of an inmate who was adopted as a child or an adult. Because DOC currently only allows immediate family members to visit and financially support one incarcerated individual, this RCW's definition of immediate family currently forces families to choose between multiple incarcerated members of their family.

### **SB 6476 WITH REGARD TO PRISON COMMISSARIES**

We support an increase to the indigent cap, which is the amount of money an incarcerated person may have in their account that is not subject to deductions from the state. The current cap of \$10 has not been adjusted for inflation or cost of living in decades, yet commissary prices—borne in large part by families of the incarcerated—have continued to rise. We also support the language in this bill that returns the commissary delivery schedule to at least once per week at all facilities, as it was before Correctional Industries took over commissary operations, in order to maximize indigent prisoners' ability to purchase sufficient hygiene and food items each month with the limited funds they receive. Passing this legislation will bring great relief to the families and friends who financially support their incarcerated loved ones and pay burdensome amounts of money due to mandatory deductions on funds over \$10.

## WE RECOGNIZE A NEED FOR LEGISLATION TO CHANGE THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:

### WITH REGARD TO FOOD QUALITY

The current quality of the food Correctional Industries (CI) serves to the incarcerated violates the intent and spirit of the Governor's Executive Order 13-06 and USDA dietary health guidelines. Primary concerns include poor food quality, subpar nutritional content, use of unhealthy condiments to meet caloric requirements, small portions, chronic diet-induced intestinal problems, and dietician menus that are not followed by individual institutions. We would like to see food service restored to the local prison scratch-cooking model that existed before CI took over and imposed processed factory-produced foods, which are transported long distances in plastic packaging. In the meantime, we support this session's budget request for replacing cold processed CI breakfasts with healthier hot breakfasts.

### WITH REGARD TO THE OFFICE OF CORRECTIONS OMBUDS

Medical issues are the number one complaint received by the Washington Office of Corrections Ombuds (OCO). In light of numerous recent deaths in Washington DOC prisons from improperly managed medical needs, we encourage the legislature to fund an additional full-time OCO Medical Ombuds.

### WITH REGARD TO PRISON MEDICAL RECORDS

The legislature should provide funding for the Washington Department of Corrections to upgrade to electronic medical records, which will provide more accessible information for incarcerated individuals and family members, and will help mitigate avoidable neglect and errors currently reported in this state's prison system.

### WITH REGARD TO WOMEN PRISONERS' ISSUES

We support SB 5876, which establishes a gender-responsive and trauma-informed work group to study and make recommendations for effective implementation of gender-specific programs, classification systems, and organizational structures within the department including, but not limited to, the creation of a women's division within DOC.

We discourage the practice of transferring women from state prisons to distant county jails to provide programming or address overcrowding. This practice separates women from their families and young children. We support SB 5291 and ask that women with serious violent crimes be considered for placement in FOSA. Please support a Gender Informed Practice Assessment tool for all women's state correctional facilities.

We oppose SB 6064, which requires full body scanners for contraband detection at each DOC prison but fails to stipulate standards for body scanner data collection and humane protocols during investigations in response to positive scanner results. The DOC launched the pilot body scanner program in April 2019 at Washington Corrections Center for Women. The December 2019 DOC report to the Legislature on this pilot program provides disturbing information about increased use of inhumane "dry cell" confinement and gives insufficient grounds supporting the proposed expansion of the use of body scanners. We recommend an extension of the pilot program, but with explicit guidelines about (1) the data that must be collected and reported and (2) the humane treatment of prisoners under investigation due to positive scanner results.

### WITH REGARD TO REENTRY BILLS

We support the recommendations from the Sentencing Task Force, but have concerns regarding the earned time portion for Community Supervision. Once earned time is established, it should remain earned. The sanction should be that an individual does not receive the earned time for that period, rather than allowing the DOC to retroactively take away time that has already been earned. We would like the bill to contain language to reflect this.