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Sentencing Commission-

Prison re-entry services are vital to ensure that individuals recently released from prison are provided resources and support to assist with stabilizing housing, income, social skills, and health. Re-entry services should start first and foremost with housing. According to the National Alliance to end homelessness (2018), “Almost 50,000 people a year enter homeless shelters immediately after exiting incarceration”. Without addressing the housing issue, individuals will continue to be released from prison to homelessness and/or unstable housing; the inflow into the homeless system will continue to increase; and recidivism will increase. When people do not have a safe place to go after prison, they are at high risk of recidivism and having a place to call home is a foundation where those recently released from prison can “rebuild their lives, obtain employment, improve their health, and achieve recovery” (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2021).

Individuals who are in corrections institutions are only there for one purpose: to serve time for the crime which they have committed and have been convicted. Coulotte (2018) states that “formerly incarcerated people are almost 10 times more likely to be homeless than the general public”. Research shows that individuals reintegrating into the community from corrections institutions should receive services such as stable housing, and that homelessness is directly associated with recidivism in that the time period directly after discharge requires immediate attention (Remster, 2017). The problematic trend is that when individuals are continuously discharged to homelessness, without a clear plan to housing, they are more likely to re-enter an institution.

National research suggests that up to 15% of incarcerated people experience homelessness in the year before admission to prison. And city- and state-level studies of homeless shelters find that many formerly incarcerated people rely on shelters, both immediately after their release and over the long term. People who have been to prison just once experience homelessness at a rate nearly 7 times higher than the general public. But people who have been incarcerated more than once have rates 13 times higher than the general public.

There are many programs for inmates to participate in while they are incarcerated, however, with no safe place to go and no social support, more pressing issues arise. NDOC offers many different programs such as parenting classes, vocational, educational, and behavioral health to

name a few. There are no programs or courses that NDOC offers that assist inmates with strategies for housing search, housing retention, understanding a lease, or understanding landlord/tenant rights. Programs such as this is just as vital as other programs offered in the institution. Prison officials may not be well-equipped to facilitate these classes, therefore, the community must address the housing problem systemwide, including educational housing programming while incarcerated and linkages to housing support upon discharge. We must work together to ensure that this population gets a chance to succeed.

Departments of corrections should partner with community services systems to develop new resources and leverage existing community resources, not homeless services, to connect inmates with community housing prior to release. Homeless services systems, sometimes referred to as Continuums of Care, could be a thought partner, but planned exits to emergency shelter should not be viewed as an acceptable discharge outcome. Metraux, Hunt, and Yelvin (2020).

AB 236 was passed in the Nevada Legislature in 2019. This criminal justice reform bill seeks to “address Nevada’s growing prison population and the expense of that growth to Nevada taxpayers” (Department of Sentencing Policy, 2022) by many different strategies. The one that I am focusing on is “improving efficiency and effectiveness of community supervision” and “minimizing barriers to successful reentry”. Under this bill, NRS 176.01343(1)(a) requires that the Nevada Sentencing Commission, which falls under the Department of Sentencing Policy to “track and access... data from NDOC... prison admissions, parole and release from prison, and prison population”. HOUSING STATUS SHOULD BE ADDED AS A DATA ELEMENT.

I suggest the following:

- Create a Nevada Re-Entry Housing Work Group (Nevada Homeless Alliance, NDOC, Parole and Probation, Clark County CoC, Sentencing Commission, and other professional, non-profit, faith-based, and governmental personnel)
 - This working group would be responsible for constructing guidance around how Nevada should properly track and share information in order to gauge actual statistics of the following:
 - 1) how many individuals enter prison from homelessness.
 - 2) how many offenders are released to the community with no community support, putting them at risk of homelessness; and
 - 3) how homelessness contributes to recidivism by tracking housing status of those who re-enter prison
- Add ‘housing status’ as a data point to be collected at prison entry and exit, by amending AB 236;
- Synthesize data to determine how homelessness does/does not impact recidivism rates;
- Strategize community plans to ensure returning citizens are:

- Informed about housing options
- Screened prior to exit, if appropriate
- Provided with housing search, placement and financial assistance as well as case management upon exit from prison or while on supervised release (parole)