

I would like to submit this letter in support of the Oversight Panel recommended by Return Strong. I have served as the Prison Education Program Manager for the College of Southern Nevada for four years. My program provides higher educational services to majority of the incarcerated population in the State of Nevada. I currently have on-site courses at High Desert State Prison (12 students), Southern Desert Correctional Center (13 students), Florence McClure Womens Correctional Center (25 students), and work as a liaison for Casa Grande's CSN population.

I listed those numbers above due to the imbalance of opportunities in the prison system within our State. Not only are their inequality in the numbers, but there is also a grave disparity in the state funding. It is my belief that the Oversight Panel is necessary to examine and ensure there are fair opportunities for the incarcerated population. Most are housed and will return home to Southern Nevada, yet two-thirds of the state's budget flows up north. This is a disservice to the state.

It is also important to note the challenges my students have shared regarding their experiences inside. Often, students are removed from courses due to unjustified reasons that is later discovered to be false. Other times students are sent to other facilities during their courses which leads to unsatisfactory academic performance. This jeopardizes their education due to the college's need to follow their policies and procedures. Students often share the negative exchanges they encounter from the prison guards, their lack of and high fees for inadequate health care, their high expenses to speak with their family, their fear for safety (especially during the covid outbreak), and this list continues. These challenges impact their ability to learn and often leads to a desire to give up. Thankfully, the minute number who can attend CSN courses have a glimpse of hope, even if it is only to escape their environment.

As a mother of a murdered son, whose offender is incarcerated within NDOC, I understand the need for safety. I ALSO understand had this man received the care, support, and human kindness he deserved as a human being, there is a significant chance that my son would be alive. Why? Because the "correctional facilities" should serve as what they were renamed as, and not continue under the practices of penal systems. This current practice does not change lives, nor protect our communities.

We need people in place to oversee and hold the Department of Corrections accountable for what is published on their website. If allowed the opportunity to speak with the individuals who are housed in these facilities, more information would leak.

I thank you for your time in reading my letter of support.

Sincerely,

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