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July 17, 2020

Support for H.2047: An Act to strengthen inmate visitation

I'm writing on behalf of the Prison Policy Initiative in strong support of H.2047 An Act to strengthen inmate visitation, which will loosen the strict standards that govern when and how people in Massachusetts can visit their incarcerated loved ones, and prevents officers from turning visitors away based on their clothes.

The Prison Policy Initiative was founded in 2001 to document and publicize how mass incarceration undermines our national welfare. We are best known for leading effective campaigns for justice reform, such as our projects to end prison gerrymandering and to protect families from the predatory prison and jail telephone industry. The importance of face-to-face visitation has been central to our work on the proliferation of video calling.

It's well documented that allowing incarcerated people to meet face-to-face with loved ones increases public safety. In-person visitation lowers the odds that a person is going to commit another crime once released, and it also reduces the chance that they will commit an infraction while incarcerated.

Formerly incarcerated people are more than 10 times more likely than the general public to experience homelessness, and are especially at risk within 2 years of their release date. Maintaining a stable connection with loved ones while incarcerated helps ensure a successful reentry, and can make the difference between stable housing and nowhere to go.

Loosening restrictions about who is allowed to visit incarcerated loved ones, increasing contact visits, and preventing officers from sending people home based on their clothes are simple and effective measures that will increase access to the maintenance of strong familial ties. Approving this act is a direct way to increase public safety in our state, while placing value on the bonds between incarcerated people and their loved ones. For these reasons, among others, our organization strongly supports H.2047.

Sincerely,



Wendy Sawyer
Research Director