

September 13, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Kristen Serrano. Ruben Gonzalez (R42703) is my fiancé and he is currently serving a 20 year sentence under the Truth in Sentencing law. I am writing to ask that bill SB2054 be reviewed for passing. Illinois is one of the few states that has not yet repealed TIS. Most states have realized either the drastic fiscal implications these laws have on a state or how the flaws run contrary to rehabilitative ideology. Time has proven that these laws have failed to make our communities safer. It is also clear that these laws have had an adverse impact on the society it was intended to protect.

The TIS laws have been in place since the nineties – Nothing has improved. Our communities are still suffering from excessive murder rates and the recidivism rates in IL and is still among the worst in the country.

There are incarcerated individuals today that are serving sentences at fifty percent and earning good time for the same crimes that individuals under TIS have been sentenced for. Those incarcerated under TIS are not earning any good time. It is not fair. For example, an individual sentenced prior to 1998 and sentenced to 20 years, would only be incarcerated for 10 years and could earn good time if taking classes, etc. Someone sentenced after 1998, regardless of classes taken cannot earn any good time and must serve all their sentence.

Some of these men and women are trying to better themselves while being incarcerated. They are wanting to change and be a part of their families lives and part of their community. My fiancé has completed many programs while incarcerated including the following: GED, College Certification for Computer Technology, Certification for Men's Peer Group, Certified Peer Educator from the IL dept of Public Health, he is currently in a construction class, and has worked in the industry.

There are many individuals that are incarcerated that are trying and want to change. If they are taking their time to do things like take classes, work, become certified in areas, they are proving to society that they are trying to change.

My fiancé has been incarcerated since he was 16 years old. It has not been the easiest 18 years for him but, he has made the best of his time and took every opportunity to learn and gain knowledge and further his education. The only problem is, none of it has yet helped him with his time.

It is also extremely important to look at this bill now since we are in a global pandemic. Looking at this bill would help release many incarcerated individuals and reduce the prisons populations. It will help with the spread of the virus. Social Distancing is nearly impossible in most prisons, especially the facilities that are set up as dorms. There have been several articles about Illinois prisons having the ability to release individuals on electronic monitoring and possibly putting those incarcerated individuals at risk keeping them there, these can be found at [newschannel20.com](http://newschannel20.com). We have also started a petition to support this recommendation that we are hoping to bring to the Illinois Department of Corrections attention.

Please hear us when we ask to have this bill passed. Incarcerated individuals understand the negative impact they had on society. However, by accepting one's actions and rigorous work with behavioral

modification programming individuals are well equipped with the practical skills and values needed to benefit their respective communities.

We truly appreciate your time on this matter.

Sincerely,

Kristen N. Serrano