

Honorable Senate Committee Members
RE: Senate Bill 191-- (I am in support for the passing of SB191)

Dear Senate Committee Members,

My name is Mark Wilhite, I am a Psychiatric Registered Nurse, I reside in Salem, and am a heartbroken father supporting my incarcerated son whom I miss every day. It is with a heavy heart that I ask for your vote for the passing of Senate Bill 191.

- Measure 11 mandatory minimums don't achieve justice. Judges aren't allowed enough discretion for the facts of a case, or the absence of a criminal history of a convicted individual.
- Based on this "one size fits all" approach from the District Attorney, meaning all individuals are the same regardless of their past or potential futures, the accused is left with overwhelming pressure to take a plea bargain to avoid a lengthier sentencing, even when the evidence appears to have reasonable doubt. In my son's case, there are other facts of the case including but not limited to the absence of criminal history. In my opinion, this would have ended with less or even no jail/prison time.
- There is no evidence that suggest a positive outcome when you give no incentives. No parole or reduction of sentence for good behavior and no chance for rehabilitation opportunities in prison is punishment not positive reinforcement in the context of the Operant conditioning theory. Positive reinforcement, such as early release for good behavior, rewards good behavior and strengthens this good behavior as the inmate associates the two together. People should be able to prove their positive change.
- The cost of being institutionalized is enormous. These are humans just like you and I. Studies show that new inmates seldom have the bereavement time needed to process what they are going through. They don't have access to their support system that we all need to help us when coping with difficult situations. They are made to believe in prison that they can't trust anyone, they are targeted, bullied, bottle their emotions, and have continued negative social interactions. There is a certain code in prison that if you ask for help you might seem weak and become targeted. Twenty year olds who cognitively are not even fully developed have to learn to survive all alone for a mistake/lapse in judgement that forever affects their lives. Studies show that the longer you are incarcerated the greater decline in cognitive control and emotional regulation.

A little about my amazing son:

He was 20 when he was arrested

Never been involved with the judicial system

He had just completed his Wildland fire fighters certification and chainsaw certification

His plan was to give back by becoming a firefighter

He loves nature (mountains, trees, rivers and lakes)

He has 3 sisters who love him and have spent their lives making memories with

He has a family support system that are heavily involved in his life

He has graduated from high school and military school

He has volunteered thousands of hours to the peace corps helping preserve our environment

He has been a member of the Northwest youth corps for many years

He is a gentleman, kind, polite and outgoing

In prison he joined the church band, helps with AA and NA groups, attended a process group, acted in the yearly prison play, works, encourages others. He does anything offered (not much offered though).

I will leave you with this;

To have hope is to want an outcome that makes your life better in some way. It not only can help make tough present situations more bearable. It also can eventually improves our lives, because envisioning a better future motivates you to take the steps to make it happen.

Please give my son hope by supporting SB 191

Thank you

Mark Wilhite