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Title:

Organization or Agency:

Topic: Meeting Date Not Listed

NA

Testimony:

Correction Advisory Committee,

I'm writing this letter to enlighten you all of the negative experiences I currently face every day while locked away in the Department of Corrections (D.O.C.).

My first complaint is that we offenders are supposed to get "5 hours" of out of cell time a day. However on the weekends and holidays we are always short staff and the whole facility is either locked down completely or partially, which cuts into our out of cell time which was guaranteed by recently passed laws. Sometimes we only get out of cell time for "1 hour" on these days.

These locked downs happen so often it's predictable. especially in the Spring and Summer times. That's when it's at its peak. These lockdowns cause hardship on our families who take time off of work and drive many miles to see us on the inside. They drive miles to the prisons just to be told visits have been canceled due to short staff.

It's not that we have a short staff issue in itself. It's just no one wants to come to work on weekends and holidays because they are afraid to get drafted due to another officer not showing up for work, leaving that officer to be stuck in here and miss the whole holiday themselves. So it's a domino effect.

Solution - we need new laws or more hiring that ensure there is enough staffing to run the prisons every day including weekends and holidays.

My second concern is that laws were passed to bring offenders and their families closer together through FREE phone calls and free emails. The free phone calls and emails are definitely a benefit. but it has a flaw!!!

Before we could buy unlimited email stamps to email our loved ones. This gave us maximum communication via email. However once the stamps became FREE we offenders are now only limited to 10 emails a day. This has restricted communication. I have more than 10 people on my approved email contact list. Sometimes it takes 3 to 4 stamps to go back and forth and communicate with one person. So 10 stamps is inadequate.

My solution - is after the allotted 10 free stamps have been used, there should be a way for us to purchase more stamps like we use to. This will remove the "restriction" of email communication and give us offenders more communication with our loved ones to strengthen bonds and keep family connections which was the goal that the passage of the free stamp law was intended for.

Lastly, we are only given 6 FREE calls a day to call our loved ones. However we are allowed 12 people on our approved phone call list. So 6 calls is not enough to strengthen communication with our loved ones. I believe we should have enough calls to match our approved phone call list. So I recommend that we get 12 free calls. if that is too expensive for the State of Connecticut to implement, my solution is - allow offenders and their family to purchase more phone calls like they allow in other States after the allotted FREE calls have been used. My family and loved ones ask me all the time. "why can't we just get more calls and emails?".

We're not asking the State of Connecticut to spend more money.

We're just asking to create a system that supports and not restrict communication between offenders and loved ones. This will greatly reduce stress and improve mental health which in turn will create a more happy and safer environment for all.

I pray something can be done to address these concerns.

Sincerely Yours
VERNON VASSELL #237710