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Senator John Coghill

February 23, 2014

Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 119
Juneau, AK, 99801

Dear Senator Coghill:

Partners for Progress much appreciates your leadership in the development of SB 64. Being involved in the process from the start, I saw you and the Judiciary Committee do an exemplary job of studying the issue by listening to testimony from a range of different credible sources from across the political spectrum. It was clear that Alaska is incarcerating many non-violent offenders much longer than necessary, and that this is a costly use of public money no matter where you stand on the subject. Alaska's sentencing legislation is due for reform! You have studied the issues in an open and inclusive manner and gained strong bi-partisan support for measures included in SB 64.

These measures, especially the creation of a Sentencing Commission, use of 24/7 sobriety monitoring for bail and probation, and strengthening the Probation and Parole Accountably with Certain Enforcement (P.A.C.E. Program) are all big steps forward.

Partners for Progress particularly appreciates the Judiciary Committee's recognition of the value of community-based re-entry programs to reduce recidivism. As you may know, last summer we started a transitional re-entry center located near the Anchorage Correctional Complex. Already the Center is intensely busy, serving 40 to 50 people daily. Partners for Progress operates this Center with two non-profit partners, the Alaska Native Justice Center and Nine Star Education and Employment. We coordinate with the Department of Corrections so former prisoners can go directly from prison to transitional housing provided through the Center. Close collaboration with our non-profit partners allows us to provide a strong combination of services to meet the range of needs of individuals with different risk levels, and to hold participants accountable for their own success. We hope that our successful re-entry center in Anchorage will serve as a model for community re-entry centers in other locations.

Over the interim Partners for Progress and the Alaska Therapeutic Court Alumni Group would like to work with you and members of the Judiciary Committee on a separate bill that would engage your knowledge of Smart Justice to address important provisions that would greatly benefit Alaska's felony level therapeutic courts. Again, we thank you and the Judiciary Committee!

Sincerely,

Janet McCabe

Chair, Partners for Progress