

**From:** Sarah Stanley

**Sent:** Thursday, April 22, 2021 2:03 PM

**To:** Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Rep. Matt Claman

**Cc:** Paul Layer; Keith Champagne; Ellen Lopez; Lucie Anderson; Michele Stalder

**Subject:** We write in support of HB118 - Expanding Prison Access to Computers. Denied access to the internet, prisoners are denied a chance to flourish.

Happy Earth Day!

To: Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins and Representative Matt Claman and members of the House Committee on State Affairs.

We write because we share a belief that connectivity benefits a person's rehabilitation process. Limited access to education creates obstacles to assimilation back into society. People who are incarcerated do not have access to the learning resource typically taken for granted on the outside--basic internet access.

Thanks to federal changes to pell grant eligibility, providing increased access to higher education for incarcerated people is **feasible** again. However, the pandemic has shut down all volunteer and paid programs in prisoner education, including GED instruction and the limited in-person post-secondary learning opportunity we were providing. Our system is unequal in respect to access to essential resources.

Without passing this bill, our digital divide will continue to widen. Problems will grow. Communities will suffer.

A mail-based correspondence model of education is not equivalent to a digital environment's standard of interactive, peer-based learning. Access to an instructor is also paramount. As educators, we support both in-person contact and increased access to resources made possible by secure internet connectivity.

"What I have learned in the short time I have worked as a GED instructor during this pandemic especially is that self-motivated distance learning for non-traditional students does not work as well as working with a teacher. I have many students who are not able to come to the office to attend study hall and their progress is much slower and more painstaking than the students who come into work with instructors or work with someone over zoom. I have worked with one student in the carceral system since the pandemic began over zoom and their progress increased significantly once this happened. It is very hard to work out of a book alone."

We write in support of HB118 - Expanding Prison Access to Computers. Denied access to the internet, prisoners are denied a chance to flourish.

Paul Layer, Vice President University of Alaska

Keith Champagne, Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs at University of Alaska Fairbanks

Ellen Lopez, Dean of the College of the Liberal Arts at University of Alaska Fairbanks

Michele Stalder, Dean of Community Technical College at University of Alaska Fairbanks

Lucianne Anderson, Program Director of Adult GED, Literacy Council

Sarah Stanley, Associate Professor of English