
From: Jill Parks [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 13, 2020 9:40 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 187

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jill Parks and I am currently employed with the State at Wildwood Correctional Complex. I have recently heard that a bill is in the process of being passed that once again will allow inmates to be shipped out of state. House Bill 187 was originally brought to the table to restrict out-of-state transfers and prevent privatization of correctional facilities.

However, here we sit once again, as this bill is being altered to sneak in language allowing inmates with certain criteria to be sent out of state. The bill now reads:

"This section amends AS 33.30.031(a) to prevent the Department of Corrections from sending a prisoner out of state unless doing so would bring the prisoner closer to family, is necessary to medical care, is a resident of another state, or the prisoner has received an aggregate sentence of 99 years or more-so long as they are not a parent with a child under 18 and their parental rights to those children have not been terminated."

I feel like we have been here too many times now. It has been said repeatedly that sending our inmates out of state is a terrible idea. The public may not understand, but those of us on the inside do. The excuse that this will not hurt Alaskans because these inmates will "never get out" is a flat out lie. That they will not be turned into "seasoned criminals" and release locally is a lie. That they will not be bringing what they learned in what is being coined as "criminal college" is once again a lie. Even someone with a 99-year sentence WILL get out. Many of these inmates will be getting out on discretionary parole at some point and many potentially in the next decade. We need to stop lying about the "benefits" to the added language in this bill. The benefits of saving money on what is maybe 400 inmates, does not outweigh the many negatives in allowing this bill to pass. We need to remove the portion of the above sentence, "or the prisoner has received an aggregate sentence of 99 years or more-so long as they are not a parent with a child under 18 and their parental rights to those children have not been terminated."

Thank you for your time,

Jill Parks

From: Angela Hall <sologrouplady@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2020 10:18 AM
To: House Finance; Cathleen McLaughlin; nancy.dahlstrom@alaska.gov; Josh Wilson; kelly.howell@alaska.gov; jennifer.winkelman@alaska.gov
Subject: Position Letter on HB187 [Please place on the public record]
Attachments: HB187letterinopposition.docx



Dear Members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Angela Hall, and I am the founder of Supporting Our Loved Ones Group (S.O.L.O.G.), a support group for the family and friends of incarcerated Alaskans. I am also the wife of an individual serving a virtual life* (159 years) sentence in the State of Alaska.

As a family member that would be directly impacted by HB 187, I felt it necessary to state for the record that I, and members of S.O.L.O.G. are opposed to HB 187, as long as it contains the following language:

"...or the prisoner has received an aggregate sentence of 99 years or more so long as they are not a parent with a child under 18 or their parental rights to those children have been terminated."

Historically, the Alaska Department of Corrections has made it a practice to contract with private prisons and send our incarcerated loved ones out of state. Whether it be a private prison, or a public prison in another State, it has never been in the best interest of our incarcerated loved ones, or the families that are torn apart due to their loved one being sent out of State. Contrary to the misconception that those serving virtual life sentences have little to no family support, I am here to say that simply is not true. Many families felt it necessary to move from state to state just to maintain ties with their incarcerated loved ones as they were shipped from Arizona to Colorado and finally back to Alaska, only to then wait in limbo for the possibility that they will once again end up out of state.

While on the surface the plan to contract with out of state facilities for the housing of virtual lifers may sound reasonable, and lauded as a cost saving measure, the original language contained in HB 187 gives numerous reasons why this is NOT a viable solution. We agree.

It is detrimental to incarcerated individuals who will most certainly be housed in the substandard conditions already implicated by the original language in HB187. It has already been proven that private prisons are found lacking in every way, including but not limited to rehabilitative programs and properly trained staff. The same can be said for many out of state publicly run prisons. HB187 was drafted on the premise that private prison utilization is not acceptable for Alaska's incarcerated population. It would be ill-advised to house Alaska's long-

term inmates with inmates of other states that tend to be more violent and much more reliant on gang mentality than Alaskan inmates. In fact, we know from previous testimony some of Alaska's known prison gangs were born out of the necessity to defend themselves from inmates from other states who operate under gang hierarchies.

To decide it is acceptable for the lifer population to be subjected to out of state housing that has already been determined NOT to be acceptable for Alaskan's serving lesser sentences flies in the face of the original intent of this bill.

It should be noted that a significant portion of this population is comprised of individuals sentenced as juveniles to 99 plus years, something that will likely be ruled a violation of the 8th amendment through future litigation. This language sends a clear message that those serving virtual life sentences are being categorized as of lesser value than the rest of the prison population, and that they are expendable due to length of sentence thereby removing what little shred of hope these individuals still harbor for their lives and their futures.

Our loved ones are human beings, not simply a commodity to be sacrificed in some misguided attempt at cost savings. The virtual lifer population do have families and great potential for rehabilitation and contributions to society, for the duration of their incarceration and thereafter, just as *ALL* other incarcerated persons have. They often serve as mentors to others and are relied upon in some cases by staff to guide new and/or younger individuals on proper etiquette while incarcerated.

Please consider the fact that this language would give sole discretion to the Department of Corrections as to which individuals would be transferred out of state, and although this amendment includes the language "who does not have family for whom family visitation is important for the emotional development of a child who lives in Alaska", this will not prevent the Department from sending individuals with other family ties in Alaska. They have in the past and will continue to send whomever *they deem eligible* despite leaving behind wives, mothers, fathers and siblings, in addition to those children who are desperately trying to remain a part of their lives.

For those that take the position these points are irrelevant due to the poor choices made by the incarcerated person to break the law, I would argue that punishing the family members was not part of their sentencing, and yet it is an unfortunate byproduct of incarceration. We suffer the loss of their daily presence in our lives, the stigma associated with making the decision to continue supporting them throughout their incarceration, and the added financial burden associated with overpriced phone calls and visitation travel expenses. Is it necessary to compound that suffering by sending our loved ones further away, thereby creating even greater hardships? The positive impact family support has on successful rehabilitation efforts has already been established in numerous reports and documentaries.

This language does not stipulate that eligible virtual lifers must be housed together with fellow Alaskans as one unit, therefore they may be housed wherever and with whomever the Department of Corrections contracts with. I cannot begin to tell you how dangerous and detrimental to our loved ones such a scenario would be, and has proven to be, from past practices.

I implore you to begin viewing Alaska's incarcerated population as human beings rather than simply numbers and statistics on budget presentations and fiscal notes.

For these reasons, and numerous others not mentioned for consideration of your time, we ask that you reconsider the decision to allow the Department of Corrections to house incarcerated persons serving virtual life sentences out of state in private prisons.

Sincerely,

Angela Hall
(907) 315-2573
2020 JustLeadershipUSA
"Leading with Conviction" Leader

S.O.L.O.G.

<https://www.solog.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SupportingOurLovedOnesGroupofAlaska/>

<https://twitter.com/SOLOGofAlaska>

*a sentence of 50 years or longer is a virtual life sentence.

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/virtual-life-sentences/>

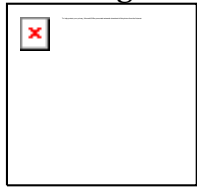
--

Angela Hall

(907) 315-2573

2020 JustLeadershipUSA

"Leading with Conviction" Leader



S.O.L.O.G.

<https://www.solog.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SupportingOurLovedOnesGroupofAlaska/>

<https://twitter.com/SOLOGofAlaska>