

Jean Trounstine
Professor Emerita of Humanities
Middlesex Community College

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a professor who taught college classes for ten years at Framingham MCI and come to this issue with experience of understanding of prisoners' needs as well as DOC's concerns.

I am joining with other organizations and individuals to support the "Proposal to Allow Post-Release Contact." This proposal allows volunteers and chaplains to work with former prisoners in programs that are designed to respect the DOC's safety concerns. It would go a long way toward assisting men and women as they return to their communities, thereby reducing recidivism. One of the ways people change is by being supported by those who understand their circumstances.

"From the Proposal which you have received, I quote: "Across the country, prison volunteers are serving as post-release mentors, e.g. recovery coaches, literacy coaches, life skill coaches, etc." Those of us who have worked behind bars or currently worked behind bars are well positioned to help others integrate and adjust to our society. I have helped my former students get into classes, go to college, and stay in school. But if I were currently working inside, I would not be able to do that.

Given the Massachusetts Department of Corrections mission "to promote public safety while providing care and appropriate programming in preparation for successful reentry," this policy change would create the logical next step toward ensuring a positive experience for returning citizens and those who care about them. I urge you in the strongest possible manner, to support this proposal to create a work group to examine the issues more closely to develop new policies that reflect wisdom, safety concerns and re-entry needs.

Sincerely,

Jean Trounstine

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Professor Emerita of Humanities

Author of 6 books, including *Shakespeare Behind Bars: The Power of Drama in a Women's Prison*