

October 14, 2015

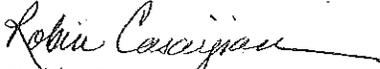
To Whom It May Concern,

As Executive Director of The Lionheart Foundation, sponsor of The National Emotional Literacy Project for Prisoners, I am joining with other organizations and individuals to support the "Proposal to Allow Post-Release Contact" (attached).

The strongest source of support for many inmates, especially those involved in rehabilitation and religious programs, are the individuals and volunteer organizations who support them while incarcerated. Allowing volunteers and chaplains to work with former inmates in programs that are designed to respect the DOC's safety concerns, can be a source of essential support in assisting men and women as they return to their communities. Many volunteers and organizations are positioned to offer genuine encouragement while helping returning citizens find housing, jobs, and vital services thereby reducing the likelihood that they will return to prison. Fully appreciating safety concerns, blanketly prohibiting any contact with individuals and organizations that have been most supportive can be counterproductive when faced with the many obstacles of reintegrating into the larger society. Importantly, chaplains are well positioned to direct volunteers as they know which organizations have sufficient structure and oversight of volunteers.

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 to support this proposal to create a working group to examine the issues more closely to develop new policies that reflect wisdom, safety concerns and re-entry needs.

Most sincerely,

  
Robin Casarjian  
Executive Director