

To: Representative Mari Leavitt, Department of Justice, & State of Washington

From: Brianna Johnson

Date: June 12, 2023

Subject: Addition to House Bill 1044

Executive Summary:

Washington House Bill HB1044, February 21, 2021, was introduced to the public. HB1044 defined expanding educational access to incarcerated & previously incarcerated individuals. The bill was passed by a unanimous vote. This bill aimed to help create chances for individuals facing hardships in gaining access to education. While this bill provides a great start, it is lacking in vital necessities for incarcerated and previously incarcerated individuals.

Overview:

Inmates being released from Prison have lost their rights to many things, like voting, taking the bar exam to become a lawyer, gun rights, housing, employment and so much more. The issue with previously incarcerated individuals specifically, being able to change their lives, attend college, & find gainful employment are the many barriers but in place barring individuals from those things, or at the very least in some cases making it impossible. More often than not, previously incarcerated individuals who attend an educational institution fail to make the productive changes in life & are then labeled as a statistic because housing is so hard to come by.

Resolution Strategies: A bill such as this should be introduced to amend RCW 72.09.460 in the same manner as HB 1044. The DOJ should administer in cooperation with institutions of higher education. To further allow previously incarcerated individuals a chance at having an education & gaining productive employment, institutions of higher education should aim more towards allowing felons access to on-campus housing, dependent upon the crimes. Lesser offenses while still felonies should be re-evaluated & the process for housing applications should be expanded upon.