



AMERICAN INDIAN OIC

May 12, 2022

The Honorable Michael V. Nelson
Chair, State Government Finance and Elections Committee
State Office Building, Room 585

The Honorable Mary Kiffmeyer
Chair, State Government Finance and Policy and Elections Committee
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3103

The Honorable Frank Hornstein
Chair, Transportation Finance and Policy Committee
State Office Building, Room 545

The Honorable Scott J. Newman Chair,
Transportation Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3105

Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

I write to you urging your support for *the Reintegration Drivers' License*.

American Indian OIC is a community-based workforce development agency serving Native American people and others who are working to enter, reenter, or advance in the workforce. Many individuals who use our services are men and women reentering the community following their prolonged incarceration. As you can imagine, these individuals face numerous challenges as they work to leave destructive behaviors in their past and make their future lives better.

Principle among these challenges is obtaining meaningful, career-track employment. Employment is the simplest and most efficient means to mitigate criminal justice contact and reduce recidivism. However, living wage employment cannot be secured until a person has reliable transportation to and from their new workplace. As a leader in workforce development for more than 40 years, American Indian OIC has witnessed first-hand how important licensed driving is to the success of individuals exiting incarceration. Unfortunately, costly license reinstatement fees are often an insurmountable barrier for ex- offenders pursuing reliable transportation.

Reintegration Drivers' License Bill will make finding meaningful employment following incarceration much easier by eliminating costly fees and burdensome drivers' license reinstatement processes. This gives our participants the opportunity to regain their drivers' licenses swiftly and affordably. This will result in better employment outcomes for justice involved.

Wopila tanka for your thorough consideration!

Dr. Joe Hobot, President & CEO

joeh@aioic.org, 612.341.3358, x149

Danielle Grant, Chair
Donald J. Flower, Vice Chair
Charles Bolger, Treasurer
Clyde Bellecourt, Founder
Joe Hobot, President & CEO



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Re: Reintegration Driver's License bill
Senate File 4458 (Osmek), House File 4571 (Pinto)
Included in House File 4293, 3rd Engrossment, Article 13, Section 37

5/11/2022

The Honorable Michael V. Nelson
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Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

My name is Marlin Meszaros I am the Program Manager at FreedomWorks. We are a reentry and recovery community in North Minneapolis. We serve approximately 140 men on any given day. Our organization was birthed from a need for dignified transitional housing for men transitioning from incarceration.

I personally am a person living in long-term recovery from substance use disorder and unfortunately have also experienced many years of incarceration due to my use. I personally know the difficulty in being released from incarceration with good intentions "to do the right thing" only to find that the cost of getting my drivers license reinstated was much more than I could afford which would then result in me returning to criminal behavior by driving illegally. That was usually my first step in eventually returning to incarceration.

My last release from incarceration was in April of 2018 this time I chose not to drive until I was legal, but it took me until October of 2020 to make that a reality. My drivers license reinstatement was by far the greatest obstacle I had to overcome. I was very fortunate in that I was able to secure housing where I work.

It's worth mentioning that the public transit system is one the hardest areas to remain in recovery. There is rampant drug and alcohol use at most transit centers and even on many of the buses and trains. This is the place that many of our participants have slipped in their recovery and



transition from incarceration. This bill would be a great benefit to public safety by easing barriers to driving legally and achieving and maintaining employment.

Thank you,

Marlin Meszaros
Program Manager
FreedomWorks Reentry & Recovery Service
Achievement Center
2912 Fremont Ave N
Minneapolis, MN. 55411
Direct: 612-791-7199



Kyros Care PBC
110 5th Street North Suite 520
Minneapolis, MN 55401

May 10, 2022

RE: Reintegration Driver's License bill
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Transportation Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3105

Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

I am writing to express my company's support for the reintegration driver's license legislation.

Our organization currently supports over 250 clients in the State of Minnesota that are in the process of recovery from substance use disorder, many of which are in some way justice involved.

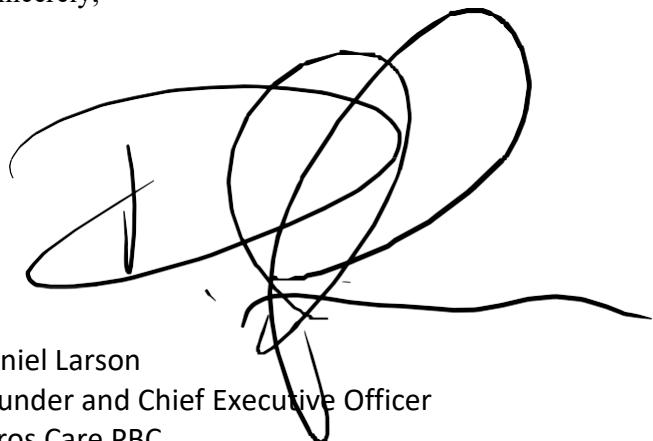
I believe that having accessibility to transportation, specifically driving privileges to give re-entry participants the ability to live up to the expectation of rehabilitation is vital in setting this population up for success.

We find that many of these people leave these institutions with stigma, shame, and unnecessary obstacles to live a law abiding and productive life. If it is important for us as a community to have expectations of them meeting the obligations of re-entry – then we also should have an equal responsibility to set them up for success with access to transport themselves to the numerous requirements of those being released.

For the recovery community that we support, driving after revocation charges from simple reinstatement issues is by far the most common charge that we see, and this can lead to people feel that they are in a situation where the deck is stacked against them, and choose to be the type of person we treat them as, not the type of person we all hope they will be.

I believe that as a community we need to give these individuals the tools to integrate back into the community successfully without unnecessary risk of recidivism, therefore I am in strong support of Legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Larson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'D' on the left and a more formal 'L' on the right.

Daniel Larson
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Kyros Care PBC

James L. Volling
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Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

I am writing to you to express strong and heartfelt support for the reintegration license bill you are considering enacting for justice involved individuals. I write on behalf of myself and the Minnesota Collaborative Justice Project on Prisoner Reentry, which is a collective impact project that includes representatives from state and federal agencies, nonprofits, law firms, corporations, and the Pro Bono Institute in Washington, D. C.

I am a member of the Steering Committee of the Minnesota Collaborative Justice Project on Prisoner Reentry ("MNCJP"), which was formed more than five years ago to address the need to reduce recidivism by eliminating barriers to successful reentry to society from prison. The MNCJP has several working groups, including Reentry Planning (which creates and presents reentry courses in prisons), Access to Services (such as housing, employment, transportation, health care, identification, licenses, etc.), and Policy and Advocacy. I chair the Access to Services Working Group and its Civil Legal Needs Initiative (which connects volunteer lawyers to reentering persons with civil legal needs regarding child custody and support and other family law matters, debt, proper identification, tax matters, past due fines, etc.). We work to address issues that can serve as substantial barriers to successful reentry. Our Policy and Advocacy Working Group creates and supports legislative and regulatory initiatives that help with reentry.

For persons returning from prison, it is imperative that they obtain gainful employment and adequate housing so that they can reestablish themselves in the community. Often it is essential that they have a driver's license to enable them to drive to find and maintain a job and necessary housing. Without appropriate employment and housing, reentering persons may well return to making money through unlawful means and thereby reoffend and return to incarceration. That result, which occurs far too often in our society, is truly bad for the individual, their family, and the community; it is expensive and wasteful, both in monetary and human terms. By making available a reintegration license another significant obstacle to successful reentry will be reduced or eliminated for many.

In the most emphatic terms possible, the MNCJP and I encourage you to support and enact Driver's License Reintegration to make available licenses to those returning from prison. Thank you for your service to the State of Minnesota and for your attention to this letter.

Very truly yours,

James L. Volling



The Kings Men Group, LLC

Erick Washington

President

7873 Taylor St NE
Spring Lake Park, MN 55432
612-226-6094
Thekingsmen4change@gmail.com

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Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

My name is Erick Washington, I am the founder of Kings Men Group LLC. I am a mentor for Minnesota Reentry Court. I mentor high risk offenders coming out of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. I find one of the biggest challenges for these men is not having the proper credentials for driving. What

I see is a vicious cycle of driving offenses due to the fact that these people do not have valid driver licenses; which keeps them from being able to get better employment opportunities.

Individuals that I mentor all served many years of incarceration and all of them had to go through many obstacles to get the information on how obtain their license.

Many of these people are still without the information needed due to several obstacles such as: High cost of fines, complexity of getting their information from other states, difficulty of reintegrating into society.

I know that one of the biggest reasons of violating their supervised release is a failed traffic stop.

Therefore, I am in favor of the legislation and support of the Reintegration License Legislation

Thank you!!

Erick Washington

May 12, 2022

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Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

My name is Tyrone Herman, and I am a felon currently in Home Confinement status, having left Duluth's Federal Prison Camp on May 17, 2022 due to the CARES Act. My final release date is January 26, 2023.

Since I've been out, I've found employment at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, a part of their Community Resource Center ministry. The Community Resource Center (CRC) helps people that have fallen on hard times...housing instability, food insecurity, clothing needs, emergency financial assistance, etc. The people that call us or walk through our doors are diverse, and comprise all walks of life, INCLUDING those recently incarcerated.

One of the major sticking points keeping our guests from regaining stability in their life is the lack of transportation. Quite often this is due to the lack of a driver's license. For the recently incarcerated, they simply can't find a way to get re-licensed; whether it's lack of funding, or an inability to get to where they need to go to do the necessary testing. The spiral that this causes is unbelievable: no transportation equals no work, equals no food, equals no housing, equals no clothes, equals NO SELF ESTEEM, and can ultimately equal recidivism.

I was fortunate: I had the support of my family. Even with that support, it was a challenge to re-establish driving privileges. Without family support, I wouldn't have a license, wouldn't have this job, and would be completely dependent on 'the system.'

To someone who has never faced this situation, it's hard to understand the negative extension of the lack of a driver's license. To someone who HAS faced the situation, I can tell you that it's debilitating, demoralizing, and completely handicaps the rest of life. I fully support this initiative.

Very sincerely,

Tyrone Herman
Register number
18220-041



MINNESOTA CORRECTIONS ASSOCIATION

PO Box 261 • Wyoming, MN 55092

Phone: 651.462.8320

mca-mn@hotmail.com • www.mn-ca.org

12 May 2022

The Honorable Michael V. Nelson
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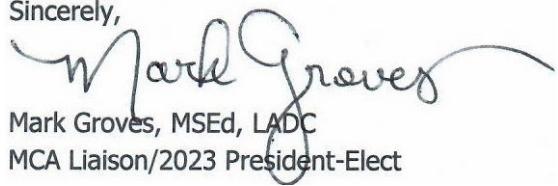
My name is Mark Groves. I am a Minnesota Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor and past president of the Minnesota Corrections Association (MCA). I currently work as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. Prior to that I was the Director of Rehabilitation and Veterans Services at the Volunteers of America - Minnesota where I managed two Residential Reentry Centers serving 120 federal inmates transitioning from prison to community for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the director of the Amicus program. Previous to that, I was the Facilities ReEntry Coordinator for the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC). In that capacity, I developed, managed, and coordinated transition/reentry services in the Minnesota Correctional Facilities. I have worked in the corrections, community corrections, and human services professions since 1977.

The Prison Policy Initiative revealed that pre-and-post-release employment services are crucial factors in the successful reintegration of reentering citizens as the unemployment rate is the highest within the first two years of release. One of the largest barriers to full and successful integration is the challenge of obtaining a driver's license resulting from state and local policies allowing for the suspension of license due to unpaid fines and fees.

Without a license, formerly incarcerated individuals are often unable to gain and keep employment, make scheduled appointments with probation officers, attend required substance use disorder and/or mental health counseling. During such a crucial time frame, this lack of a major necessity can increase the chances of an individual recidivating or being subject to revocation.

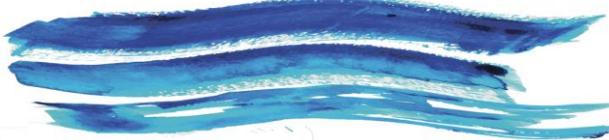
MCA is in favor of the legislation and support of the Reintegration License Legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Groves". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "M" at the beginning.

Mark Groves, MSEd, LADC
MCA Liaison/2023 President-Elect

Three Rivers Restorative Justice



Respect · Accountability · Healing

400 5th Avenue SW Rochester, MN 55902 threeriversrja@gmail.com www.TRRJ.org
Phone: 507-396-4095

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Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

I am Kendall Hughes, Chair of Three Rivers Restorative Justice and a retired Federal Prison Chaplain. Most of my career for the past 25 years has centered around helping men prepare and reenter society as law abiding citizens.

Many of the men returning home from the Federal Prisons where I served had been incarcerated for a decade or more. The process of reintegrating was daunting and complicated already. Adding to that the difficulties of obtaining a drivers license, delayed their ability to gain employment, help aging parents or other important tasks.

This is frustration is almost universal for the men that I mentor as they return home. When they have exhausted all they can do, they may choose to drive un-licensed. In order to have successful transition from incarceration back into community, and to give men and women seeking to turn a new page in their lives, I am in favor of the legislation and support of the Reintegration License Legislation House file 4571.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kendall Hughes

Chair, Three Rivers Restorative Justice
Federal Prison Chaplain, Retired
(507)396-4095



May 11, 2022

Chair Representative Frank Hornstein
545 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

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Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

My name is Otis Zanders, and I am the CEO at Ujamaa Place. It is with great pleasure that I write this letter in support of Driver's License Reintegration.

Since 2010, Ujamaa Place has provided transformation support services to young, predominantly African American men, helping them build positive lives for themselves and move into contributing roles in society. We proudly serve as a diversion partner for the Ramsey County JAG Diversion Program and the City of St. Paul Criminal Justice Re-entry Partnership, helping men ages 18-30 exit the criminal justice system and re-enter society. Converting to a data-centric organization revolutionized our work circa 2017, providing quantifying data to track participant progress and measure impact. Employment is one of the metrics used to measure participant success and is critical to successful re-entry. From the data, we know that participants who are employed are less likely to re-offend and that being unlicensed is a significant barrier to employment.

With the current laws in place, many of our participants are unable to obtain a driver's license. In order to aid participants with successful re-entry, Ujamaa Place provides rides, bus fare, and other resources to help participants get to and from interviews and jobs. Without these supports in place, participants are less likely to obtain and maintain a job, threatening the likelihood of successful re-entry. These supports are unsustainable over time, however, because of the number of participants in our program. Due to the disproportionate impact of the current laws on the population we serve, participant needs far exceeds our available resources.

According to 2021 data, Ujamaa Place has served over 5,000 men and maintains a 4% recidivism rate, compared to 44% nationally (Source: National Institute of Justice). The data confirms that participants achieve personal success when they are supported. It's simply a myth that too much support somehow



UJAMAA
PLACE

makes people trying to get on their feet worse off. It seems rather cruel to me to impose an expectation of someone and then make it as difficult as possible for them to meet it – which is what the current laws do. Why wouldn't we want to reduce the barriers to employment as much as we possibly can? I believe the benefit far outweighs any public safety concerns, which I think the drafters did a wonderful job carefully and adequately addressing. Thus, I see no disadvantages to the adoption of the proposed changes to H.F. No. 4571.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "*The greatness of a nation can be judged by how it treats its weakest member.*" Serving as CEO since 2010, I have seen firsthand the negative impact that suspended driving privileges has on an individual trying to turn their life around. When the laws that govern citizens are so unrelenting that the weakest member is unable to overcome, we must determine that greatness demands better of us – *more mercy, more peace.*

Faithfully,

Otis Zanders

BRIAN PEDDLE
GENERAL



F. BRADFORD BAILEY
TERRITORIAL COMMANDER

MAJOR E. RANDALL POLSLEY
COMMANDER
ADULT REHABILITATION CENTERS

The Salvation Army

Founded in 1865 by William and Catherine Booth

ADULT REHABILITATION CENTER
900 N. 4th St.

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Re: Reintegration Driver's License bill
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Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

To those in consideration of issuance of reintegration driver license, I here contribute 15 years of professional experience in working with individuals transitioning from prison to community.

My experiences make it clear how important employment and legal transportation to it is vital to successful community reentry from correctional facilities:

Individuals who are employed compared to those unemployed are more likely to demonstrate:

- *Lower rates of recurrence*
- *Higher rates of abstinence*
- *Less criminal activity*
- *Fewer parole violations*
- *Improvements in quality of life*
- *More successful transition from long-term residential treatment back to the community.*



BRIAN PEDDLE

GENERAL

F. BRADFORD BAILEY

TERRITORIAL COMMANDER

MAJOR E. RANDALL POLSLEY

COMMANDER

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*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Substance Use Disorders Recovery with a Focus on Employment and Education Issue Brief

I currently manage a large Salvation Army long-term residential recovery program in Mpls. All of our current sixty program participants are justice impacted individuals. Our community reentry phase includes a sixty-day period of ongoing free room and board for men who have gained employment toward saving money for next steps. Many have been furloughed to us directly from correctional facilities. Given the favorable job market and many more opportunities with companies who provide a livable wage, public transportation is not always a feasible logistical option whereas in many cases, legal driving status would make it possible to reach employment destinations.

I believe that I represent our organization as in favor of legislation in support of the Reintegration License legislation.

John G. Hulteen

Program Manager

612-968-6756

John.hulteen@usc.salvationarmy.org



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Brian Peddle, *General*
Commissioner F. Bradford Bailey, *Territorial Commander*
Lt. Colonel Dan Jennings, *Divisional Commander*

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Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

I am writing this letter in support of establishing reintegration license for individuals being released from prison. **DRIVER'S LICENSE REINTEGRATION LICENSE.** In my 23 years as a correctional services chaplain for the Salvation Army, I have witnessed the extreme disadvantage of not having a driver's license or suitable form of ID for those being released from prisons.

A driver's license gives a person a chance to reestablish themselves back into society. It is necessary for finding housing, jobs, banking, and many other things for living a productive life. Many individuals end up recidivating due to not having proper forms of ID or driving privileges that are necessary for these basic needs. A driver's license will go a long way towards reducing barriers to a successful re-entry back into society.

I hope you will find this to be necessary legislation and pass this bill.

Charles E. Berry Sr.

Correctional Services Director
Salvation Army – Northern Division
Charles.berry@usc.salvationarmy.org
(651) 746-3532



Volunteers of America Residential Reentry Center

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Chair, Transportation Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3105

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Dear Chair Newman, Chair Hornstein, Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

My name is Cheryl Turiotto, I am the Employment Specialist /Program Coordinator at Volunteers of America Reentry Centers at both Lake Street and Roseville Facilities. I have worked in reentry for the past 12 years.

I believe that legal transportation is crucial to the success of the men and women that I work with that are coming out of incarceration. The men and women that I work with are typically at our facility for up to 8 months. From the time they arrive the majority do not have a drivers license. Their license has either expired, they have never driven legally, or they have fines. Most of these men and women come out seeking a new direction and real change in their lives beginning with getting their driver's license and getting a decent job. However, they are met with significant barriers to accomplishing the real change they so desire.

I have had individuals that have fines after being incarcerated for several years, when they come out, they are looking for a clean start. They get a job, pay the fines, only to find out that paying the fines, means that they are pleading guilty and risk losing their license up to 1 year.

Many men and women coming out of incarceration turn down good paying jobs due to lack of transportation and the inability to get a license reinstated.

This is a story that is all too common for the men and women that I work with. When someone coming out of incarceration has exhausted all that they can do, they start to make poor decisions. They may choose to drive un-licensed. When family is no longer willing or able to drive them, they turn to old friends to get around. They also start to lose the hope that they had for real change.



Volunteers of America Residential Reentry Center

This creates a vacuum effect in their lives, and essentially feeds a revolving door of increased risk of repeated incarceration and involvement with the justice system.

To have successful transition from incarceration back into community, and to give our men and women a real chance for change, I am in favor of the legislation and support of the Reintegration License Legislation House file 4571.

Cheryl Turitto
Employment Specialist / Program Services Coordinator
651-255-4461 / cheryl.turitto@voamn.org