



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary
In support of S.773 - An Act to expand sentencing options
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The purpose of the bill is to increase prisoner participation in work, education, vocational training and/or social skills programs with the goal of rehabilitating the individual and decreasing recidivism by expanding sentencing options. Many states have found it is better to be “smart on crime” rather than “tough on crime” by expanding sentencing reduction strategies and encouraging judicious use of parole.¹

This bill, sponsored by Sen. Will Brownsberger, decreases the amount of time served for some individuals to become eligible for parole once they have served two-thirds of their sentence, and allows for more good time credits to be counted towards release. It also allows for some individuals to be more likely to be released on parole and get supervision and support, which results in better integration into society.²

The LWVMA position on corrections is in favor of “a sound corrections system which provides opportunities for the rehabilitation of the adult and juvenile offender” and supports “measures to promote the offender's rehabilitation through individualized treatment” and “programs within the Department of Corrections that gradually allow the prisoner more freedom and more responsibility as merited.”

With all of the interest in comprehensively addressing criminal justice reform in Massachusetts, now is a good time to focus on releasing some incarcerated individuals earlier on parole so they have access to programs necessary for them to become successful members of society.³

Prisoners should be eligible for services that are essential to reduce reoffending and for rehabilitation even if they have not “earned” access to an essential program.

We hope this bill is strengthened, by including individuals serving mandatory minimum and other sentences, where there is a need for incentives to increase participation in rehabilitative programs. We need to carefully consider whether the length of a given sentence is serving the goal of public safety and the goal of rehabilitation of our residents.

¹ <http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/the-state-of-sentencing-2015-developments-in-policy-and-practice/#II.%20Sentencing>

² <http://www.cjpc.org/uploads/1/0/4/9/104972649/white-paper-addendum-2.25.13.pdf>

³ <http://www.bostonbar.org/prs/reports/finalreport081402.pdf>