



PRISON LAW OFFICE

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June 14, 2016

Assembly Member Reginald Jones-Sawyer
Chair, Assembly Public Safety Committee
1020 N St., Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for Senate Bill 759 (Anderson and Hancock)

Dear Chairperson Jones-Sawyer,

The Prison Law Office is pleased to strongly support SB 759, which will promote good behavior and incentivize participation in rehabilitation programs by restoring eligibility for *earning* credits for prisoners housed in Security Housing Units (SHU's), Psychiatric Services Units and Administrative Segregation Units. Eligibility for credit earning had been the norm for most prisoners in segregated housing until they were taken away in 2010 by a special session budget bill (SB 3X 18) without any policy discussion.

The Prison Law Office, a nonprofit public interest law firm, has been in the forefront of legal efforts to enforce the constitutional rights of prisoners and juvenile wards for 40 years. Our staff attorneys represent individuals, engage in impact litigation, educate the public about prison and juvenile detention conditions, and provide technical assistance to attorneys throughout the country.

Contrary to popular belief, most prisoners in segregated housing are not there because they have committed a serious rule violation. As part of the *Asker v. Brown* (2015) settlement, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has stepped up its case reviews of prisoners held in segregated housing for non-disciplinary violations. Over 1,000 reviews have been conducted and 80 percent of these prisoners have been transferred to the general population. There have been no significant incidents as a result of these transfers, which is further evidence that these prisoners should have been eligible for credit earning while they were in segregated housing.

Credits are not automatic; rather, they must be *earned*. They are earned only by participating in programs and by remaining free of disciplinary violations. As a result, credit earning is universally recognized by corrections experts as a tool for promoting good behavior and prison safety. Prisons are largely punitive, but positive incentives are a necessary component for promoting rehabilitation. Good behavior should be rewarded for those who are obeying the rules and doing the right thing.

For all these reasons, the Prison Law Office strongly supports SB 759 and urges your vote in favor of this bill.

Sincerely,

Lynn Wu
Staff Attorney, Juvenile Justice Policy and Projects Manager

cc: Senator Joel Anderson

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