

My name is Sariah. I'm 14 and my Dad was sentenced under measure 11. I think Senate Bill 191 is so important for so many people and families, but it would also mean so much to me. We have tried to do things as a family as much as possible. My family lives in the valley and my Dad is over in Ontario, Oregon right now. Before Covid, we traveled over there about once a month to visit. It was hard and disruptive to life to make a 14-hour round trip drive that often, but it was worth it. We have video visits every Sunday where I and my brother can show him things we are doing, and we often get to study scriptures together. My Dad calls every day when they aren't on lock down and we get to tell him about things that are going on in our life, and he gets to tell us about his day. My Dad is doing what he can with the few resources he is allowed. He reads books that family and friends send, he memorizes scripture passages, he has a job to help people get their GED, he tries to keep up good health by exercising on the single exercise bike that they share on a unit and walking the track, and my mom helps him plan out extra nutritious food things to get on canteen. He was going to church until they shut that down during the Covid lockdown, but he has initiated having a spiritual lesson each week with a few guys in dayroom when they can. He consistently writes us each a letter every week, and he encourages us in the good things that we're doing. My Dad is on honor housing and has never gotten in trouble once. However, none of those things are counting towards earning anything. He gets a letter every six months telling him how much time he has earned off his sentence for the good things he's been doing, but he isn't actually eligible to receive it. I mean, that's just like telling your 5-year-old, "Look! Here is how many cookies you've earned for being good and doing your chores! But, I'm sorry; you can't have any." I mean, how many kids would ever want to put in the work again? The whole goal of the system should be to help people *want* to be a better person! If not, then what is the point? Wouldn't it be so much better if those that were willing to change got to be a contributing member to the community? I mean, they can't support themselves in prison even if they wanted to or help with a few extra things like making phone calls to their family! A lot of them basically just sit there watching TV and wasting so much time because there isn't much of anything else to do and there is no incentive to do anything different! Wouldn't it be awesome if for the most part, the majority of people who went to prison got out and never came back? But, all we tell so many of them right now is that you're just supposed to sit there and do nothing of worth or value, and when you do get out, what you did is going to follow you around for the rest of your life, and so a lot of people won't even hire you, which means you can't provide yourself and live a good honest life. So, basically we've just told them that you made a mistake, so now we're going to make it really hard for you to do anything but keep on failing. Wouldn't it be so much better if we helped them to change and to do good things that would help other people? I'm pretty sure that if you look up how to stay happy and healthy when you are having a rough time emotionally, mentally, or physically, doctors and psychologists wouldn't tell you that feeling you have no value and have nothing to contribute to the world is going to help. No! They would tell you to do something, to find a way to serve or help someone in need, to find a purpose, to have people around you who can help support you every

step of the way, to find the valuable things in life because the only way that you're going to be able to get rid of all the unwanted bad things in your life is by replacing them with all the good! But, in order to do that, you have to find good things to fill your life with. That would take some bigger changes to provide that, but at least we can start by telling them that the good things they are choosing to do now matters! As someone who can be quite a perfectionist, I know how awful it is to feel discouraged and like the things you are doing aren't adding up and aren't making a difference. I know how it feels to make mistakes and feel bad, wishing you could do better. But, don't we all make mistakes? Don't we all do things wrong? There are some awful and horrible things that people do sometimes, but why not try to help encourage them to change, especially because even good people make mistakes. I think of how we try to help children who are in bad situations, without good role models or a supportive family, who are struggling with countless different issues. We try to find and help them, but some of them grow up without ever getting a real chance in a good environment. Yes, we definitely all get to make choices for ourselves, but those kids grow up without good examples, and grow up to do things that are wrong, and then we punish them for it. Don't they deserve a chance to change and find a better way? You can't judge who a person will be for their whole life based on one choice. Just punishing people, isn't going to fix their mistakes any more than having kids say sorry will magically fix something they broke. But at least people can have the opportunity to change and go forward to do things that impact the world for good. We all want to get to the point where we do things simply because they are good and valuable, but when we are just starting, we do it for the incentive. So, why don't we help people start? This bill that gives people sentenced under measure 11 the chance to earn time off their sentence, is so simple a change, but it can make such a huge impact! The special thing about this bill is that it tries to help those who are already serving their time right now. And why wouldn't we do that? If we agree that this is a change that is good and the current system isn't working, then why wouldn't we try to fix as best we can what has already happened. Like I said, sorry doesn't fix it, but doing the best to repair what we can helps. We can't go back and fix it for the hundreds of people who have already served their time, we can't give back what was lost, but we can at least still change it for those serving right now. It would help my Dad who is trying. It would help thousands of other people who are trying. It might not seem like much, but a couple years could be enough time for my Dad to make it to my college graduation or my wedding. For those who have kids, imagine not being able to be there for your child's wedding. Imagine your kids not being able to have you there to be a part of the important events in their life. A couple years, or even several months, can make a tremendous difference. There are so many bills, so many issues, and so many problems in the world today. We might not be able to solve them all or find a perfect solution, but we can do our best. I hope that those reading this choose to support SB 191. I think that it is important, and would be the start of changing so many lives and families for the better. Let's make people's lives in Oregon a little better!