

3/23/2021

Dear Distinguished Members,

Thank you for your time in listening to my story. I was listening to music with my headphones in while writing letters to my children when I was assaulted by another AIC (Adult in Custody) from behind with a wet floor sign. She hit me multiple times in the back of my head before I realized I was being attacked.

I stood up and barely got a glimpse of this woman's face before she grabbed me by the back of my head and started punching me in my face. She threatened to give me dentures, and I didn't even know who this person was. I never met her before this instance. At that moment I was faced with a crucial decision. I had to make a choice. Fight back to defend myself or not fight back and continue to be brutally assaulted. Though I am day for day due to measure 11's mandatory minimums, I did not want to risk getting in trouble. We are not allowed to fight back at all or we will be sent to segregation, even if it is self-defense.

They say that faith is having the radical audacity to believe in the not yet seen. This happened last June, so at the time I had not even known there was such a bill as SB191. However, since the day I showed up here at Coffee Creek Correctional Institution, I have had faith that perhaps one day the laws may change. So, At that moment I made the choice to lay on the ground and cover my face as this large woman viciously kicked me over and over again. It was almost a full minute before an officer intervened, which is an extremely long time to be in such a vulnerable position. I was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. The woman who attacked me knew that by assaulting someone, the facility would not require her to go to minimum. She was day for day like myself, and obviously she felt as so she had nothing to lose.

It is different for me. I made the conscious decision at that moment and in many other circumstances to stay on the straight and narrow because I have been hopeful for a bill like SB191 to allow the effort I have made to make this prison a safer environment worth it. Every single kick, punch, and bruise I endured from that assault was worth not defending myself. I would have been devastated to find out later on about this opportunity to have earned time retroactive, and had I fought that girl I would have lost it. Regardless of what happened to me, I will be sad for her if this law passes because she won't be granted this spectacular chance. Unfortunately, she made that choice. Every day we are faced with strict rules. To have earned time retroactive would be that those of us who have measure 11 have made the effort to abide by these rules and follow the stipulations DOC has put in place for us. There has been very little to zero incentive for AIC's with measure 11, especially in this last year with lock downs and no visitation from our loved ones.

I choose every single day. I make choices all day long to do what's right. I choose life, change, and freedom. Please allow those of us who have chosen to make positive changes in our life while incarcerated and who have helped make our prisons a safer and more structured environment to earn time off our sentences. Retroactive earned time means we made the right choices by following the rules.

Personally, retroactive earned time means I did the right thing by letting that woman beat me until I couldn't even recognize myself in the mirror. It would mean that I have allowed myself the extraordinary opportunity to learn and grow from this experience, but that my faith in such a bill as SB 191 was not in vain.

Please vote yes on SB191 and know there are those of us in here who have earned it, and will gladly continue to make Oregon prisons a safer and more rehabilitative environment.
Thank you so much for listening to my story.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Lovell