

Hello, my name is Lisa Guirsch, and I am not only a PSU Rebound member, but I was also a student in the Higher Education in Prison program at PSU. Higher Education in Prison changed my life, and now that I have been out for 7 months, I spend my time as a full-time student, AmeriCorps member, and help other higher education in prison students transition out of prison and continue on their path to further education.

Speaking candidly, I would like to tell you all that there is a major problem when it comes to DOC and HECC seeing eye to eye. The Higher Education in Prison program believes in being part of the solution by reducing recidivism through education, and DOC is not always so compliant.

Unfortunately, some of the officers at the prisons do not believe that AIC's should receive any privileges. Well I am here to say that education is not a privilege, it is a necessity for a better life; not only for people like me, but for our communities.

There needs to be an MOU for DOC to understand that officers cannot just "not print out a call-out" because they don't want to, or send an AIC to the hole for something/anything just to get AIC kicked out of the program and lose everything. There are other things/bigger things at stake. Pell is at stake. There should be an MOU so that AIC's do not lose their programs and end up owing Pell grants back, therefore making them ineligible for further education upon release.

Sadly, I have personally seen officers not allow an AIC to leave the unit for class because there was no call-out printed for their own personal biases. I have engaged in conversations with Sergeants that do not believe we should have been able to go to school because they have to pay for their own kid's college.

We need to be part of the SOLUTION, not part of the problem. Please vote to pass this bill for an MOU that not only protects all that is at stake here. My wife and I both do the same thing, working, volunteering, and pay it forward, and we are helping others do the same. I want a better community, a safer community, and education is the key. We all deserve a chance to learn to become productive members of society.

Thank you, Lisa Guirsch [lisa.guirsch@gmail.com](mailto:lisa.guirsch@gmail.com)