

Submitter: Isabela Villarreal

On Behalf Of: Cayce French

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Measure: Support Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579

3-12-23

Dear Legislators,

The founding fathers of the United States were intent on creating a democracy where everyone could contribute to the country, escaping the Monarchical ways of Great Britain. There is now such a large population of Adults in Custody (AICs) that excluding their right to vote violates the collective consciousness of our democracy. AICs have many family and friends who support them and share the same wishes for making America a better place for everyone. Allowing AICs to vote and be concerned with the greater good of their community upon release helps them give up on their old anti-social community in prisons and gangs. AICs should have the right to vote because our families are impacted by prospective laws and it rehabilitates AICs to become interested in their pro-social community.

AICs families are impacted by prospective laws. Many AICs have children who could be negatively impacted by education bills. AICs often had a negative experience in school and our empathy for our children and next generation to avoid our footsteps to prison makes us want to vote for better, safer, and more productive childhood experiences for them.

When prisons lack pro-social programming, AICs are more likely to become absorbed in anti-social experiences. However, empathy is an inherent component of the human brain, so if AICs are given more opportunities and a better environment to strengthen empathy and engage in pro-social and restorative programming, many will try to improve themselves. Allowing AICs to vote is another pro-social program for rehabilitating them to become better neighbors upon release. One day I will be released back into my community, no one would want who I was fourteen years ago living next door to them. Thanks to the better prisons I was lucky to reside in, I've had a lot of pro-social and restorative programming, such as what voting rights would provide us, that has helped me strengthen my empathy, remorse, sobriety, and philanthropic goals. Restoring AICs' voting rights will open a new opportunity for volunteers from the outside

to provide us programming to make us more aware of social problems.

AICs have families that we are empathic for, and we definitely don't want the next generation to follow in our footsteps. Being able to vote, we would have an opportunity to contribute to a better future for them. Some prisons that have less programming need more opportunities for AICs to think about what's going on in their community, being allowed to make votes for a better society gives AICs another opportunity to rehabilitate into a pro-social mindset. In his letter from a Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King Jr states, "...an unjust law is no law at all"... Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust" (1963). Not allowing AICs the right to vote degrades our potential to fully embrace our developing pro-social personality, and is therefore an unjust law.

Please vote yes

Sincerely,

Cayce French

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