

February 16, 2023

Chairman Ben Barnes
Vice Chair Mark Chang
Members of the Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairman Barnes:

My name is Chris Wilson. I was incarcerated for sixteen years after receiving a life sentence at the age of seventeen. I'm now the Executive Director of The Chris Wilson Foundation, an organization with a mission to transform the incarceration system by providing and supporting programming, advocacy, and art that centers personal relationships, resilience, development, and agency.

I cannot emphasize enough how crucial education was to both my time on the inside and my eventual release. Education is the reason that I walk free today and the reason I am inspired to help those in similar situations to the one I was in. In prison, I got both my GED and bachelor's degree, I taught myself two languages, and I completed almost every therapeutic model available to me. When I got out, I wrote a memoir about my life—*The Master Plan*, published by Penguin Random House in 2019.

Providing access to and tracking education for prisoners is critical for returning citizens, who often don't have the skills to record—and in turn display to potential employers—their own life achievements. Delegate Amprey's bill would undeniably assist in a smoother transition for returning citizens, as well as help to motivate those still on the inside. There is something dignified and inspiring about seeing your educational accomplishments written out, seeing them logged.

As a formerly incarcerated individual, a citizen who did in fact return to society, and now, a nonprofit director, I fully support this bill.

Thank you and warm wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Wilson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chris Wilson