



# JEWISH INCARCERATED FAMILY SERVICES

March 5th 2024

Honorable Members of the committee,

As the director of a faith-based services organization supporting those incarcerated and their families, I write to express wholehearted support for the proposed bill, HB0297, which aims to establish a Correctional Ombudsman Unit. This initiative is crucial for enhancing oversight, accountability, and improving conditions within our correctional facilities, aligning with our collective commitment to justice, rehabilitation, and the inherent dignity of every individual.

In my experience advocating for the incarcerated, it has become painfully clear that a significant gap exists in addressing religious needs and ensuring safe avenues for inmates to express grievances. Despite assurances of zero tolerance towards retaliation for grievances, the reality faced by many inmates tells a different story. Fear of retaliation is a tangible barrier preventing inmates from advocating for their legitimate religious, spiritual, and human needs, essential for their rehabilitation and personal growth.

Judaism teaches us the importance of rehabilitation, emphasizing the potential within every individual for teshuvah (repentance) and positive societal contribution. This principle is not only central to our faith but underscores the universal value of giving individuals the opportunity for redemption and transformation. The establishment of the Correctional Ombudsman Unit, as proposed in HB0297, represents a significant step towards realizing these ideals, ensuring that the rights and spiritual needs of those incarcerated are respected and met.

Moreover, the treatment of inmates and the conditions within correctional facilities directly impact their prospects for successful reintegration into society. As we know, the majority of inmates will eventually return to their communities. It is in our collective best interest that they do so as rehabilitated, whole individuals, capable of contributing positively. Ensuring the provision of religious accommodations and protecting inmates from retaliation when expressing grievances are essential components of this process.





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I urge you, as our representatives, to support and pass HB0297. This bill not only addresses critical issues within our correctional system but also stands as a testament to our nation's commitment to justice, rehabilitation, and the protection of fundamental human rights. By supporting this bill, we affirm the value of every individual's potential for positive change and the importance of treating all individuals with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this vital issue. I look forward to your action in support of this transformative legislation.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Sholom Reindorp  
Founder & Director  
Jewish Incarcerated Family Services

