



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

Anne Bocchini Kirsch
Director of Advocacy, PREPARE
anne@prepare-parole.org
(410) 994-6136

HBo435 - Child Support - Incarcerated Obligor - SUPPORT

PREPARE is a nonprofit organization that supports people through the parole process and reentry. I am one of the cofounders and a returning citizen myself, so I have both professional and lived experience with incarceration and reentry. One of the major setbacks that can be faced by individuals returning to the community is establishing themselves financially. Most individuals make only a few dollars per day while incarcerated, and return to either transitional programs that initially restrict work or lower wage jobs that leave them SNAP and Medicaid eligible. A critical component of successful reentry, and therefore improved public safety, is helping these individuals achieve and sustain financial stability and independence.

People serving prison sentences face all kinds of debt that accrues in silence while they are incarcerated, unable to pay or even check on it. Personally, I returned to over \$10,000 in taxes that would have been much less had I simply been able to pay it on time, but not only was I not informed until I left prison (once it had gathered 7 years of interest), even had I known, I earned less than \$1,200 per year at my skilled level prison job. There was no opportunity for me to earn enough to make meaningful payments.

The \$300/month that I have to pay on this relatively small amount is significant when one considers that I left prison with nothing - no vehicle, no house of my own, no clothing or furniture - and in significant medical and dental neglect that continues to absorb a lot of my income. I am fortunate enough that I have a job where I earn enough to make these payment arrangements. Otherwise, I would have been unable to register a vehicle at all, and the interest would keep accruing while I struggled to figure out transportation, limiting my job and housing prospects and my ability to access healthcare.

Child support is no different. It is unrealistic for the state to pay someone under \$100 per month and then expect them to pay out many times that amount. It makes no sense to punish someone for being unable to give what they do not have and cannot legally earn. HBo435 is a common sense measure that recognizes the fact that children benefit from stable parents, and reentry stability comes from community support, not the addition of impossible debts and barriers such as license suspension. I urge a favorable report.

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PO Box 9738 Towson, MD 21284