

Honorable Members of the Senate,

I stand before you today to advocate for a transformative bill SB0291 that offers individuals incarcerated for extended periods the opportunity to seek freedom after 20 years. This proposal is not merely a gesture of leniency but a strategic move towards a more effective and humane justice system.

Studies have shown that the risk of recidivism decreases with age. Data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicates that while 68% of released prisoners are arrested within three years, the rates are significantly lower for those who have served longer sentences and are older at the time of release. This suggests that individuals who have spent two decades or more in prison are less likely to reoffend, especially when provided with proper support and opportunities upon reentry.

Furthermore, evidence-based reentry programs have demonstrated success in reducing recidivism. The Second Chance Act, for instance, has funded initiatives that provide employment assistance, housing, substance abuse treatment, and family programming, all of which contribute to better outcomes for returning citizens. These programs not only enhance public safety but also facilitate the reintegration of former inmates as productive members of society.

I can personally attest to the transformative power of such opportunities. My name is Curtis Alston, and after spending years incarcerated, I have dedicated the past decade to mentoring and supporting individuals reentering society. Through my work, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that guidance, education, and employment can have on reducing recidivism. By helping to change the narrative for those who do not have a voice, I have seen countless individuals rebuild their lives and contribute positively to our communities.

Granting the possibility of parole after 20 years acknowledges the capacity for change within individuals. It recognizes that with time, maturity, and the right support, people can rehabilitate and reintegrate successfully. This bill is not just about offering a second chance; it's about strengthening our communities, reducing crime, and affirming our belief in the potential for human transformation.

I urge you to consider the data, the success of reentry programs, and the personal stories of redemption as you deliberate on this bill. Together, we can create a justice system that balances accountability with compassion and effectiveness.

Thank you.