

Testimony in Opposition of HB20-1274
House Committee on Judiciary
February 20, 2020

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee.

My name is John Seward. I am from the University of Denver's Scrivner Institute of Public Policy. I have spent years researching labor and employment and criminal justice. It is important for me to note that I do not speak for the University of Denver. The opinions and information I express here today are mine and mine alone. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you.

I testify here today in opposition to House Bill 20-1274, Concerning an Increase in Sentence Served Before Parole Eligibility.

This bill seeks to extend the length of a sentence that must be served before becoming eligible for parole. It increases the eligibility from 50% to 75% of the sentence served. The Office of State Budget and Planning determined that it costs the taxpayer \$39,303 a year to house one inmate in Colorado. Delaying parole eligibility for inmates will keep them in prison longer costing the taxpayers more money.

Just because you are eligible for parole does not mean you get parole. Being eligible for parole means you get to plea your case to the parole board and they then decide if you can be released. We don't let people out of prison early we release them once they complete a minimum sentence and then demonstrate they have earned release.

The Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice in a study released in May 2016 found that the length of a prison sentence has no effect on deterrence of crime. Putting people in jail for a long time does not deter crime. It just doesn't.

The purpose of prison, jail, incarceration; is to rehabilitate those who commit crimes. We are locking people up, 52% of which are people of color, and throwing away the key. We are missing the fundamental purpose of incarceration.

The American Enterprise Institute has concluded that our justice system is fundamentally flawed. Further they find that increasing how long a person has to wait to be eligible for parole, has no effect on the outcome of that person and in many cases will cause that person to commit more crime and become more violent while in prison.

House Bill 1274 is not worth the paper it is written on. The bill does nothing to address the issues in our criminal justice system. It creates problems and solves none. I stand in complete opposition of the bill and I urge the committee to vote no.

I would be happy to take your questions.

Thank you.