

Hello Mr. Speaker and other members. I come to you all today to bring notice to bill HB1603 which now has yet another exemption being offered.

I would like to say if I may that I advocate for many through out the commonwealth and some of those do have firearm offenses years ago, this could have been a situation where they may have been around another's firearm who is lawfully able to carry said firearm, but being in the presence of that gun allowed some to be convicted of possessing a firearm being a felon. Then there are those who committed no actual crime nor violence with a firearm and even moreso the offense of being in possession of a firearm is not always possessing an actual gun as we all know.

I say this due to the lack of clarification on this proposed addition to the bill listed as number 18 which states all firearm offenses. This is a very broad area and needs that clarification prior to being voted on by members.

In todays earlier house meeting someone mentioned a good point that I would also like to add to that if I may.

They said stated that it is not the gun but rather the individual. I would like to agree with this statement but also point out that it should be on a case by case review of those individuals as well. Some currently incarcerated are there for a technical or minor probation violation in which the original offense occurred many years prior but still nether-less they are once again serving a sentence for that original possession of firearm offense when seen in the VACORIS system. The original bill for the enhanced earned credits has yet to be applied as rhe 2020 legislation had directed be done by VADOC and for that there are many like one I have been assisting since June 2022. Which he has none of those exemptions listed and is 100% eligible for the ESC2 credits as mentioned at rates of 15 per 30 and 7.5 per 30 and for them to be applied retroactively. VADOC failed to do this and therefore has allowed this man to remain incarcerated beyond the time now required by law to do. He has been held unlawfully for the last 5 months but also has been subjected to mental health being compromised by allowing this to continue on top of the retaliatory actions by VADOC after having myself send request to correct their mistakes and release this individual as required by law. Even to date they are continuing to be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment as well as being denied due process and what they have rightfully earned. This person has chosen to learn from their prior mistake now 11 years ago and has taken action to better themselves for a successful reentry into the commonwealth. But even with all of their hard work and determination the VADOC and their actions place this person in jeopardy each day they passes by taking away their support. Having their visitation taken with said individual, phones being unavailable majority of the time as well as withholding emails sent to said party and even their mail and packages that they send to again their support. I have mentioned all of these things to you to provide you with a visual as you discuss this bill. That visual is that yes, many incarcerated seem to return to that life and those are the ones who do the bare minimum to remain focused on growth while inside. There are also those who take the opportunity as a time to self reflect and discover what they may need to become a better person and an asset to their communities when returning. Not all are the same. I ask that you take this into consideration when voting on this matter. The person should not be defined by their past crimes but rather who they are today.

Thank you ,
Jennifer Jessup