



Washington State Senate

To: Senators Mike Padden, Steve O'Ban, Lynda Wilson and Jan Angel
January 31, 2017

Re: Senate Bill 5069

I am writing to urge passage of Senate Bill 5069, a measure that would allow our community and technical colleges to work with the state Department of Corrections to offer educational opportunities to incarcerated individuals.

This issue is personal to me because I have seen the benefits of correctional education programs firsthand while working professionally with LaGuardia Community College in New York. The college handles continuing education for the New York prison system and I was fortunate enough to see how access to education can offer hope and purpose for inmates who would soon be starting all over in society.

Research shows that individuals who go to college while incarcerated are 43 percent less likely to return to prison than those who do not. A Rand Corporation study shows the policy is also a winner for taxpayers -- investing one dollar into educational programs saves up to five dollars in re-entry costs.

In addition, our own non-partisan researchers at the Washington State Institute for Public Policy recently completed a report finding correctional education (includes adult basic education, general education development (GED), and post-secondary education) produces \$20,000 in net benefits, per participant, from reduced recidivism.

We are seeing bipartisan agreement on this issue at the national level. Programs like the Second Chance Pell pilot program are already expanding educational opportunities in state and federal prisons for the first time in two decades.

I believe this legislation has the ability to improve safety and give individuals a fighting chance at jobs and productive roles in their community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lori Zellman".

State Senator
41st Legislative District