

The Importance of Education, Rehabilitation, and Mental Health for Incarcerated Individuals

Good afternoon,

Today, I want to speak about a subject that affects not only incarcerated individuals, but also our families, communities, economy, and public safety.

The true purpose of a correctional system should not only be punishment — it should also be rehabilitation, transformation, and successful reintegration into society. When we invest in **education, rehabilitation, and mental health support** for incarcerated individuals, we create safer communities and significantly reduce recidivism.

Hundreds of individuals leave prisons and jails each year, many without support, and therefore many return to poverty, unemployment, addiction, untreated mental illness, and homelessness.

Because of these barriers it often leads individuals back into the criminal justice system creating a high recidivism rate. Recidivism is not just a personal failure — it is often a failure of opportunity and support systems.

The prison system has the opportunity to educate incarcerated individuals by changing the system for the betterment of society.

Education Creates Opportunity!

Education gives incarcerated individuals job skills, confidence, purpose, and a hope for the future. It helps individuals see themselves as productive members of society rather than defined by past mistakes. It also builds family relationships, strengthening the bonds of parents and children, husbands and wives.

Educational Programs Reduce Recidivism

Studies consistently show that incarcerated individuals who participate in educational programs are far less likely to reoffend. Some programs may include GED preparation, vocational training, college courses, financial literacy, and, technology and trade certifications. Sing Sing Correctional Facility has been offering College Courses through Mercy College through the Hudson Link Program. Lives have been changed by this program. There have been times when the facility has suspended the program without warning or explanation. If the system is to rehabilitate then it cannot give and take. This only creates a sense of unworthiness.

One facility may have a college program, and another may not. If the incarcerated individual is transferred, for any reason, to another facility and after he/she has started a program, a program not at the new facility, the individual loses out.

You must have consistency across the board. All facilities should have programs that promote entrance back into society.

There are many benefits to society. Society will see reduced recidivism, stronger families and communities, increased employment, and savings to the taxpayer.

Education is one of the strongest tools for breaking cycles of crime and incarceration.

When the system rehabilitates incarcerated individuals, many causes of the criminal behavior will and can be addressed. Some programs that support the individual are;

- Substance abuse treatment
- Anger management
- Life-skills training
- Conflict resolution
- Parenting classes
- Workforce development.

People are more than the worst mistake they have made. Rehabilitation creates change, redemption, and accountability.

Successful reentry benefits everyone as it makes the individuals employable, and more likely to support their families. It also makes them less likely to create new crimes building a safer more stable community.

Rehabilitation transforms incarceration from a cycle of punishment into an opportunity for positive change.

You must support policies that expand prison education programs, increase access to mental, health care, support reentry services, and remove barriers to employment after incarceration.

You should encourage partnerships between correctional institutions, schools and colleges, employers, and community organizations.

In closing, you have to believe that incarcerated individuals are still human beings with the potential to grow, learn, and contribute to society, that education provides opportunity, rehabilitation provides direction, mental health support provides healing, and together, these programs reduce recidivism, strengthen communities, and create safer futures for everyone.

Final Closing Statement

When we invest in rehabilitation instead of hopelessness, we do not just change individual lives — we change entire communities for the better.

Thank you.