

Wells, Mary Gay

From: Acton, Jo
Sent: Tuesday, March 15, 2005 10:00 AM
To: Slaughter, Bill; Alsbury, Ron; Wells, Mary Gay
Subject: MWP notes on SB-29

EXHIBIT 6
DATE 3-7-05
SB 29

TO: Committee Members
RE: SB 29

This bill has the potential to positively impact recidivism at the Montana Women's Prison.

Statistics at the Montana Women's Prison show that over 65% of the women incarcerated are the primary caretaker of minor children. Upon release from prison, they will again have full responsibility for support of these children. With the limited job skills these women have, they are fortunate to secure a minimum wage job. This leaves little to pay rent, buy food, pay for child care and/or school supplies, clothing, etc.

The temptation of involvement in illegal activity, just this time, to make ends meet is very strong. The will to stay straight, keep trying, and avoid criminal activity is weakened when you cannot even provide for basic necessities.

Over 49% of the women incarcerated at MWP are there due to charges stemming from methamphetamine or other drug involvement. The primary conviction offense in MWP is Possession of Drugs with additional charges including theft, forgery, sale of drugs, etc.

Providing the opportunity for these women to access public assistance while they are re-establishing themselves in the community, would significantly impact their ability to succeed.

Additionally, the prison and the pre-releases could assist in educating the women on how to apply for assistance or facilitate the application process prior to release.

As always, the responsibility for success rests with the individual, however, this bill removes one more obstacle to that success.

Jo Acton
Warden
Montana Women's Prison