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Dear Honorable Representative,

Senator Stuart Greenleaf has sponsored two important pieces of legislation, SB 522 and SB 523, which could soon come before you for an important vote. Justice & Mercy would like you to support these measures as an important endeavor to reform our state's criminal justice system. This approach is backed by a lot of research. For example, currently both Tennessee and New York have implemented similar laws and are succeeding in the great effort to both reduce recidivism and save taxpayers a lot of money. Tennessee, for example, has already seen a drastic 10% reduction rate in recidivism.

These bills propose that the Department of Corrections and Probation and Parole be merged together. With this will come an estimated savings of \$87 million over a five-year period as well as a \$38 million in savings from reducing the recidivism rate. I can appreciate why some in the House may be hesitant about such a drastic change, but I would encourage you and your colleagues, from both sides of the aisle, to keep in mind that these bills' primary purpose is to increase public safety and ensure that parole agents have all they need to adequately perform their job duties.

It is important to emphasize that this is not about the Department of Corrections taking over the parole side of our justice system. This is a merger, and the parole division will still be in charge of regulating the conditions of supervision. Moreover, they will still have the final say in the revocation process and stand as an independent entity, meaning they will have their own line item in the state budget.

By passing this bill into law, ex-offenders coming out of prison will sometimes have the opportunity to be supervised at home using a GPS tracking device. This would only cost taxpayers \$3-4 per day as opposed to the \$65-75 per day, the latter of which is the cost to keep an ex-offender at a community corrections center, where they are often mixed with other ex-offenders and do not have the possibility to connect with positive role models. It is important in this critical stage of an ex-offender's life that they do not go to live in such a negative environment.

As you probably know, each parole agent is responsible for about 50 people. Once this bill passes into law, parole agents will no longer be responsible to approve home plans, and they will therefore have more time to focus on the quality of their work, rather than the quantity of people they must supervise. This is important because parole agents have enough to do already without that added burden. Under Senator Greenleaf's proposed legislation, a separate department will be created where experts will be able to take a closer look at home plans and approve, deny, or modify them as they have been trained to do.

"What does the LORD require of us, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God?" **Micah 6:8**

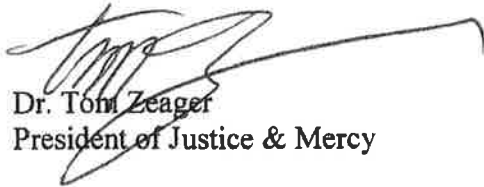
Promoting Safer Communities Through Criminal Justice Reform

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There are many other added benefits that would greatly increase public safety while at the same time saving taxpayer dollars. This comes at an important time where every item in the budget must be closely scrutinized. Thank-you for taking time to read over this letter.

Have a wonderful day!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Zeager', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Tom Zeager
President of Justice & Mercy