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Chairpersons and members of Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee:

As someone whose public service career began as a 22 year-old state probation-parole officer in 1973 (and until 1976), just prior to the beginning of a nationwide reversion from a primarily rehabilitative corrections model to more of a deterrence and public safety model, particularly for young adults, I witnessed the strengths and shortcomings (sometimes tragic) of parole, given limited community corrections (including monitoring) resources. My subsequent positions, after law school, as a state and (briefly) federal prosecutor exposed me to the impact of reactionary sentencing in drug enforcement cases despite a consensus about the roles of addiction and self-medicated mental illness, as well as socioeconomic (including educational) barriers for young adults. Now that much more is known about these factors as predictive of the potential for change, and institutional and community corrections resources are available to advance and support such outcomes, it seems past time to use these resources, not only for pre-sentencing predictions involved in suspended sentences, but also in more comprehensive assessments of the actual behavior and achievements of those incarcerated, if for no reason other than fiscal responsibility and the certainty that most inmates will reenter society with enormous hurdles potentially affecting the general public (resources and safety).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in this way, as I also remain interested in the practical aspects of the reintroduction of parole without the "smoke and mirrors" in sentencing which used to accompany its pro-forma application.