



EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT
an initiative of the University of Illinois

Credit for Change

LEGISLATIVE HEARING - HOUSE JUDICIARY-CRIMINAL COMMITTEE

MAY 08, 2025

Testimony of Mynor Lemus, EJP Student

My name is Mynor Lemus. I am a community partner with Illinois Alliance for Reentry and Justice. I am speaking in support for the Credit for Change campaign. Credit for Change redesigns our hope of what is possible for individuals in custody, staff and our society.

I embody Credit for Change as my journey defines what change looks like. The uneducated 19-year-old version of myself committed a crime for which I've taken responsibility and I am remorseful. A 24 year sentence was the consequence. In my 20th year in IDOC I have successfully accomplished earning my GED and associates degree with Lake Land College, a bachelor's degree, graduating cum laude and Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society distinction from the Eastern Illinois University, a paralegal certificate with Blackstone.

I am a current student at the University of Illinois with their Education Justice Project, and a member of CAVE, which stands for community anti-violence education program. I've been a peer educator and mentor to incarcerated men as part of the Building Block program. I'm employed as a baker on third shift. Mind you, all of this programming has been completed with no incentives as they do not exist in IDOC.

Corrections in Illinois as currently constructed does not offer good time rewards to individuals like myself. My dedication and efforts towards change are not recognized. In becoming law, Credit for Change acknowledges this dedication to change by crediting us with earned good time. I know that involvement in these academic environments produces a culture of change that benefits everyone in an incarcerated setting. This exposure to knowledge naturally promotes positive behavior. Educational stimulation improves our mental health, which spills into our emotional well-being. Credit for Change will invigorate hope as we look to engage in activities for self improvement, rather than remain subject to a warehoused state of being.

I represent all of the educational institutions who have contributed to my advancement as a person, and I can speak to the wonderful emotions I felt in accomplishing my achievements. I have a responsibility to carry myself with that pride. The hope of a future where I am able to promote myself in a positive light is real now. My accomplishments are now features on my resume, and skills developed will be practiced. That is the hope of which I speak for those who will follow in the Credit for Change road. There are many men and women like me who have changed without the credit. However, there

would be many, many more because of the hope that Credit for Change legislation would bring on the inside. These are the men and women who will be released back into our community. This aligns with the Illinois Constitution, Article One, Section Two* that requires us to work towards restoring the offender to useful citizenship. This is why Credit for Change is important.

*All penalties shall be determined both according to the seriousness of the offense and with the objective of restoring the offender to useful citizenship.