

PETITION TO GOVERNOR & MDOC DIRECTOR

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Simply existing and watching oneself grow old doesn't take any special ability. That happens all on its own. For countless Michigan Department of Corrections ("MDOC") prisoners serving parole eligible Life sentences this is a sad reality due largely, if not entirely, to unwise and archaic MDOC practices that are found nowhere in Administrative Rules or MDOC Policy. Currently parole eligible Lifers are denied any opportunity to participate in any core programming simply by virtue of their parole eligible Life sentences. After completing basic education—if not already a high school graduate—they are allowed to take one vocational trade class and participate in correspondence courses if they can afford to pay for them. However they are required to hold an institutional work assignment. The result is that most of these men and women end up lying around prison feeling like zombies. For most of them the opportunity for real growth and rehabilitation seems an impossibility, and the best they can hope for is to make it from day to day and fend off depression, anger and self-pity. These prisoners are warehoused for decades with no real opportunities for positive rehabilitative "growth." Yet "growth" is perhaps the most powerful tool a prisoner has for success both while in prison and when released.

The MDOC relies solely on a 14 year old Operating Procedure ("OP") to deny parole eligible Lifers the opportunity to rehabilitate themselves through core programming. OP-04.06.180D Section IV ¶F states that the Parole Board may also refer for programming prisoners serving "life sentences." However we think this applies only to prisoners serving Life without the possibility of parole. Prisoners serving Life with the possibility of parole come under the jurisdiction of the Parole Board after serving 15 years, formally 10 years, and can actually be paroled. However, these men and women are denied the opportunity to become parole ready through core programming. We believe rehabilitation is having the will, the skill and the *opportunity* to make real change and obtain substantive "growth." Many have the will and the skill, but are denied the opportunity.

Because Michigan's enormous corrections budget consumes billions in precious revenue annually and because we the Citizens of the State of Michigan believe that:

- Continued imprisonment of parole eligible Lifers must be justified by a legitimate concern for future public safety;
- Prison should be restorative rather than retributive;
- There is more to a person than the worst act he or she has committed; and
- Those imprisoned should have access to all the resources they need to achieve meaningful rehabilitation.

We are calling on the MDOC Director to issue a Director's Office Memorandum or implement a Policy Directive that allows parole eligible Lifers to take core programs such as Thinking for a Change, Violence Prevention, Sex Offender Therapy, Substance Abuse, etc., after having served 15 calendar years of their sentence.

