

Testimony in Support of House Bill 25-1256
House Judiciary Committee

March 18, 2026

Good afternoon, members of the committee. My name is Corinthiah Brown, and I am testifying on behalf of The Don't Look Back Center and myself in support of House Bill 25-1256.

I serve as the Lead Care Manager at the Don't Look Back Center in Aurora, Colorado, where we work every day to serve and empower some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Our clients are primarily women - including trans women, trans men, and gender nonconforming individuals - many of whom have had recent involvement with the criminal legal system and have experienced significant trauma.

At our center, we provide transitional sober living, outpatient substance use treatment, mental health services, clothing, food, and other essential supports. Many of the people we serve are survivors of domestic violence. Some are living with HIV. Nearly all are dealing with housing instability and the challenges that come with rebuilding their lives after incarceration.

One of the most common challenges we see happens immediately after someone is released.

Under current law, individuals are released from prison with only \$100 in "gate money," that \$100 is expected to cover transportation, food, hygiene items, and the first steps of rebuilding their lives. In today's economy, that amount barely covers transportation, let alone the basic necessities someone needs in their first days of freedom.

In our work, we often see people arriving at our doors the same day or the day after they are released, trying to figure out how to get basic items most people take for granted - things like a razor, deodorant, a change of clothes, or transportation to an appointment. These may seem like small things, but they make a real difference in whether someone can show up prepared for a job interview, a treatment program, or a meeting with a case manager.

Another challenge we regularly encounter is that many people are released without the documents they need, such as identification or other critical paperwork. Without those documents, even simple steps - like applying for a job, securing housing, or accessing services - become difficult or impossible. And without money for transportation or fees, people cannot even get to the agencies that issue those documents.

As service providers, we see how these barriers stack up immediately after release. Without the right support in place, we are putting thousands of Coloradans each year in an extremely difficult position at the exact moment when stability matters most.

I recognize these challenges not only through my work but through my own life experience. For many years, substance use played a major role in my life. Between struggling with addiction, limited resources while incarcerated, and even fewer supports upon release, reentry was a challenge I had to face multiple times. Often, I had nowhere safe to go, and sometimes I was sent to places that were not truly livable.

Because of those experiences, I understand firsthand how important it is for people to have real support when they return home.

House Bill 1256 aims to help people start that process on a stronger footing. Ensuring that individuals leave incarceration with the basic resources and documentation they need can make a meaningful difference in whether they are able to stabilize quickly and begin rebuilding their lives.

From the perspective of those of us doing this work every day, policies that reduce these immediate barriers help people stay engaged with services, pursue employment, and move toward long-term stability.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective. On behalf of the Don't Look Back Center, I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 1256.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Con O'Brien", written over a horizontal line.