

*Via Hand Delivery*

May 19, 2021

Governor Roy A. Cooper III  
20301 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699

**Re: Collaboration Request - State-issued IDs for Returning Residents**

Dear Governor Cooper:

We are a coalition of individuals with criminal records, criminal legal policy and advocacy organizations, and reentry services providers. As you know, there are numerous barriers people with criminal records face while trying to successfully re-enter their communities after being released from prison. One barrier that has been a constant for years is the need for a state-issued identification card ("ID"). The lack of ID can prevent returning citizens from accessing resources that are essential to successful re-entry such as housing, employment, healthcare benefits and food assistance. This problem could be resolved through better coordination and sharing of information between the NC Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the NC Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

DPS may have most, if not all, of the information that DMV needs to issue a NC ID to individuals leaving prison. In fact, many people leaving prison may have had a NC Driver's license or ID prior to their incarceration. Information from the pre-incarceration ID could be used to issue a new State ID for people being released from prison. This requires coordination between the two agencies months before someone is scheduled to leave prison, but would result in eliminating one of the many barriers people face as they return home.

The current one-by-one, individual effort that is required is cumbersome and inefficient. It leaves many people frustrated and ultimately unable to obtain an ID. For example, J.B., a Durham County resident, returned from a period of incarceration over a year ago and still does not have a state-issued ID because of challenges obtaining a replacement social security card. Another resident, D.P. has been working to obtain his driver's license since October 2020, but has been unsuccessful after 5 interactions with the DMV because during each visit D.P. was given a new requirement to obtain his license. J.B. and D.P. are not alone in this struggle.

A state issued ID is an absolute necessity for people leaving prison. We want to be part of the solution to this problem and ask that (1) a designated representative of our group be part of discussions amongst DPS, DMV, Governor Cooper's and Attorney General Stein's offices about resolving this problem and (2) representatives from the governor's office attend a June 2021 listening session to hear from directly impacted people and reentry service providers about the barriers to obtaining IDs for returning citizens.

We hope that needed change can result from this effort. Thank you for your attention to this request. We look forward to hearing from you. You can contact Laura Holland at [laura@ncjustice.org](mailto:laura@ncjustice.org).

Best regards,

North Carolina Justice Center  
American Civil Liberties Union - North Carolina  
Black Voters Matter Fund  
Benevolence Farm  
Disability Right North Carolina  
Enrichment Strategist Services LLC  
Fayetteville PACT  
For The Struggle, Inc.  
Justice Served NC  
National Association of Social Workers - North Carolina Chapter  
NC Community Outreach & Wellness Center Inc.  
Sustainable Alamance  
The Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham  
The Resiliency Collaborative

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