



Dear Iowa CURE members,

This spring 2025 newsletter was mailed to you, our incarcerated members, the week of January 27, some each day, in hopes they won't be laid aside by Pigeonly. Edited in the second week of the Iowa Legislature, and first week of the second Trump administration, it is hard to tell what will be happening when you read this. We do send updates via email at least monthly, to our community members who can keep you current. We can best advocate for YOU if we are in contact with THEM, those on the outside with whom you have contact. Please ask them to email iowacure@gmail.com (best) or write us at PO Box 41005, Des Moines IA 50311, to be put on our email list.

We will introduce them to other people who also have loved ones in prison, and update them by email in a timely manner. We will also invite them to an online support group for family members that meets twice monthly. In these informal conversations, we connect families and friends who have loved ones in prison, for encouragement, support, and practical action.

We do depend on letters from our incarcerated members, to know what is going on in our prisons. They inform us where to best advocate. We aren't lawyers, however, and can't advocate specific cases. That is why our connections with your friends and loved ones on the outside are so important.

Look to the final story of this newsletter, to learn of a special chance for YOU to write.

PELL GRANTS CAN ENABLE YOU TO GET EDUCATION

Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals became available in 2023. The criteria for educational programs and participating colleges are laid out in the

bill. Iowa's colleges and universities have partnered with our correctional institutions in various ways throughout the state. If you are interested in pursuing college classes and want financial assistance, please see your counselor learn about availability in your institution and to apply.

As for those in federal lockup, ." Federal Bureau of Prisons states:

"As of July 1, 2023, all provisions of the FAFSA Simplification Act related to incarcerated students are active. This means that the Pell Grant is now available to all qualified incarcerated people to further pursue post-secondary education for jobs with livable wages. While this process must be initiated and managed by the individual postsecondary school, the BOP eagerly awaits the increase in partnership opportunities".

A MEDICAL POWER OF ATTORNEY COULD BENEFIT YOU AND LOVED ONES

We have found that loved ones who have a Medical Power of Attorney (POA) with their incarcerated person fare much better in giving information and getting information regarding health issues during incarceration. Since the incarcerated people are in the custody of the state (or, in federal cases, federal government) a POA gives a loved one some legal standing to rely on when health issues arise.

As a loved one, you can obtain a Medical Power of Attorney form on the internet, sign it, mail it to your loved one and have him/her sign and get it notarized in the institution. Then keep a copy of it in his/her file and mail one back to you. Or, if preferred, the incarcerated person can ask his/her counselor for the form, sign and notarize it, send it home, and the loved one can sign it and send a copy back. Either way the incarcerated person's signature must be notarized to make the document legal.

A Financial Power of Attorney is also an option if the incarcerated person wishes to pursue that document.

DEPORTATION OF UNDOCUMENTED—

It has been strongly recommended to President Trump that his deportation program of those who entered the country illegally begin with currently convicted of crimes and serving time in correctional facilities in this country. The thinking is this would be the the best place to begin, since these people are already "known" criminals and are costing millions of taxpayers dollars, possibly a billion. The financial savings would be immediate. People thus deported would never be allowed entry into our country again

CURE will keep a close eye on this issue and will update loved ones with progression.

IOWA PRISON PERPECTIVES YOUTUBE CHANNEL KEEPS US INFORMED

This YouTube channel was launched by Sue Hutchins, Iowa CURE VP, in late April and endeavors to interview people who have been incarcerated, their loved ones, people who have worked for DOC, people who work in the reentry communities throughout the state and advocates for betterment of our justice system.

The interviews, numbering over 100, are from 25 minutes to an hour long and each interview asks for viewers comments.

The purpose of this channel is to inform the public about prison from numerous perspectives. The interviews have had thousands of views.

We encourage loved ones and other interested people to watch and to give feedback as well as comments, and suggestions of whom to interview. Send to lowaprisonperpectives@gmail.com.

ABOUT THE COMMUTATION PROCESS IN IOWA

You likely are aware that the commutations in Iowa have not been granted by governor's Bransted nor Reynolds. There is an excellent law review, written by Andrew Wendel, entitled *A False Beacon of Hope*, available to read and download on the internet at Journal of Gender, Race and Justice <https://jgrj.law.uiowa.edu>.

There is serious talk in the Iowa Legislature of at least one bill being prepared to provide release of prisoners over the age of 55 with critical health issues. We will let keep our community members updated with the progress of this effort.

BOARD OF IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS IS A PLACE TO SEEK ACTION

The Board of Corrections is a seven-member board of citizens appointed by the governor. It is to advise the leadership of the Department of Corrections. Iowa CURE endeavors to have a representative at each meeting, and this person and other advocates can speak to the board for two minutes during the public comment period. After the public comment period the board has a time to make their own comments ("Open Discussion), though they seldom address what has been said by the public.

Prior to the COVID pandemic, the board met in person monthly, alternating meetings at IDOC headquarters in Des Moines with meetings at one of the prisons throughout the state. More recently, they have met only in Des Moines on alternate months. Sometimes the board meets virtually, and the group has not met in person since June 2024. They met only twice for the remainder of 2024. These in-person meetings had been a place for advocates to network and be energized by each other. Still, even when virtual, advocates can use the public comment period to seek action.

Persistent remarks by advocates about the use of the Interdisciplinary Task Force and inaction on cases referred to the Iowa Attorney General's Office resulted in board members asking a representative of the Attorney General to speak at a meeting. This request was made at the November 2024 board meeting but was not honored by the administration at the January 10 meeting. At that meeting, Acting Chair Jim Kerston demanded that the Director Dr. Beth Skinner schedule a face-to-face meeting with a representative of the Attorney General Office at the next meeting, scheduled (per the agenda of the January meeting) for Friday, April 11. As of mid-January, the schedule for any future meetings has not been posted on the website. We will watch and see if a representative of the AG office appears at that meeting, and how frequently meetings are scheduled in 2025.

Iowa CURE is investigating to see if the board is in compliance with the Iowa Open Meetings law. Previously, handouts (minutes of previous meeting, budget sheets, etc.) were made available to the in-person public and online by meeting time, but this has not been the case in recent meetings. Minutes for the November meeting were approved at the virtual January meeting without the public being able to see them online, and as of mid-January, they are still not available.

How to attend meetings, and other information about the Board of Corrections may be found in the Iowa Department of Corrections website (choose About, and under that Board of Corrections).

NOW YOU WRITE--TELL US ABOUT AN ACT OF KINDNESS

You are invited to send a paragraph about an act of kindness which you have received given during your stay in prison. We are aware of prison groups supporting charities, of loving kindness offered to hospice patients, joy in music making, and are sure there are many, many more. We would like to put your stories in future newsletters. Please keep them short and we will not use

names or use them fictitiously unless you, as the author, specifically give us permission to use yours. Mail your paragraph about an act of kindness to Iowa CURE, PO Box 41005, Des Moines, IA 50311

We know that reforms and improvements of our prison system come slowly. This is a way we can encourage each other in the meantime. We can also use these stories to inform the public and put a human face on those people we incarcerate.

This edition of the Iowa CURE newsletter was edited by Richard Nordin, office volunteer.

Iowa CURE is a completely volunteer organization. We have no staff expenses but must pay for online licenses, postage, and printing supplies. If you can help, please pay your 2025 Iowa CURE dues. Please fill out the information form below and mail it with your membership fee to Iowa CURE, P.O. Box 41005, Des Moines, IA 50311. You can also pay on our website www.iowacure.com.

Prisoners - \$2 Individual - \$10 Family - \$20 Sustaining - \$50 Life - \$100

Name/Organization_____

Address_____ City_____ State__

Zip_____

Email_____ Phone_____