

# Restore Justice Foundation

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://restorejustice.org/restore-justice-statement-on-sb-2311/>

### Public Facing Advocacy Writing

#### *Bill Would Give Families Visiting Incarcerated Loved Ones a Statewide Point of Contact*

We applaud Senator Laura Fine for introducing SB 2311. This measure would establish a statewide contact within the Illinois Department of Corrections for family members and other visitors of inmates. Currently, those with incarcerated loved ones must rely on staff at a particular facility to address visitation issues, including conflicts, concerns with staff behavior, or questions. These same staff members may be directly involved in the issue at that facility.

Right now, visiting family members have no redress when they are denied access or treated unfairly. Families need a point of contact, outside of their loved ones facility, who can receive and investigate complaints, and attempt to resolve issues.

Ninety-five percent of inmates will eventually be released. Visits from loved ones are key to helping people rehabilitate and re-enter their communities after incarceration. Its expensive and time-consuming for families to visit IDOC facilities, but they do so, and, as a state, we need to make these visits more accessible.

Restore Justice works to improve prison conditions that erode human dignity. Many of our staff and board members are formerly incarcerated people or have loved ones in prison today. Our team visits people incarcerated in Illinois prisons, and we fund an annual bus trip for family members to visit loved ones at Menard Correctional Center, which is 350 miles from Chicago. Our staff, family network, and board members conduct more than 200 visits to people in Illinois prisons each year.

While, of course, we have seen good and proper treatment of visitors, we have also witnessed painful incidents, incidents which could have been mitigated by the presence of an external point of contact. We have stood with family members and friends as they were denied basic fairness, often with their children watching. Weve seen an elderly woman become incontinent after having to wait more than 30 minutes to be escorted to the bathroom. Weve seen people turned away and prevented from visiting loved ones after driving for hours, despite not having violated any listed rules. Weve seen the anguish that results when people are treated in this manner and the humiliation that comes from having no recourse.

SB 2311 is a step in the right direction. We urge the Illinois General Assembly to pass it in the spring 2020 session. Restore Justice will continue advocating for people who are incarcerated and their families.

MISSION FOR HOPE CENTER , ILLINOIS , COUNTY OF COOK CHAPTER  
ILLINOIS CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IS NEEDED IN THESE DARK DAYS , WHERE INJUSTICE IS FOUND AND  
IGNORED BY A LOT OF PEOPLE.  
ILLINOIS RESTORE JUSTICE LEGISLATION SB 2311 IS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OF ILLINOIS STATE  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

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