



**AMERICANS FOR  
PROSPERITY®**

**NEVADA**

**Testimony to the Nevada Assembly Committee on Judiciary.**

**March 8, 2019**

Thank you, Chairman Yeager and Members of the Judiciary Committee, for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Marcos Lopez and I am a field director for Americans for Prosperity – Nevada. On behalf of our activists across the state, I urge you to support Assembly Bill 236, which implements recommendations from the Nevada Advisory Commission on the Administration of Justice.

AB 236 makes far-ranging reforms across Nevada’s criminal justice system, from pre-prosecution diversion down to probation policy.

AB 236 helps expand options for pre-prosecution diversion programs to ensure that more people experiencing mental illnesses, intellectual disabilities, or substance abuse issues can get access to treatment and our limited prison space can be reserved for more dangerous individuals.

Providing law enforcement with a variety of options besides incarceration for individuals with behavioral needs will help improve community-police relations and officer safety as well.

Additionally, the bill promulgates the use of risk-and-needs assessments to help Nevada make smarter pre-trial decisions and rehabilitative programming choices through evidence-based criteria about defendants’ needs. The bill creates training guidelines and requires frequent review of these tools to frequent review to make sure they are as effective as possible.

The bill also includes several sentencing reforms, such as needed raising of Nevada’s felony theft threshold, to ensure that punishments are more proportionate to crimes committed and that sentencing enhancements are reserved for serious offenders. The legislation additionally expands parole and compassionate release for older and sick prisoners, who pose significantly less risk and are more expensive to incarcerate.

Finally, AB 236 includes a thorough set of reforms to our probation and parole system. Too many people re-transitioning back to their communities near the end of their sentences end up back in prison for minor technical violations that don’t reflect them posing a danger to society. The legislation also gives prisoners nearing release and those transitioning back to society better support in receiving individualized services in areas such as transitional housing to provide better opportunities for success.

*Americans for Prosperity (AFP) exists to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies and goals of a free society at the local, state, and federal level, helping every American live their dream – especially the least fortunate. AFP has more than 3.2 million activists across the nation, a local infrastructure that includes 36 state chapters, and has received financial support from more than 100,000 Americans in all 50 states. For more information, visit [www.AmericansForProsperity.org](http://www.AmericansForProsperity.org).*

Nevada has an exceptionally high incarceration rate which has consistently remained above the national average. AB 236 will help Nevada make smarter decisions before trial, at sentencing, and in re-entry to help reduce the number of people in prison while improving public safety.

Americans for Prosperity – Nevada supports AB 236 and its role within our state’s larger Justice Reinvestment Initiative package.

We believe the next step for this committee’s work should be to reduce or eliminate mandatory minimums. These policies remove judges’ discretion to sentence people according to the facts of the case, often resulting in harsher sentences than necessary. Avoiding new or expanded mandatory minimums, allowing judges to depart from them more often, and lowering or scrapping them for many categories can supplement the important work AB 236 does in reducing Nevada’s needlessly high prison population.

Assembly Bill 236 institutes criminal justice policies which are smart on crime and soft on taxpayers, helping our state make better decisions to reduce over-incarceration and keep our communities safe. Recognizing that over 95 percent of prisoners will eventually rejoin us as members of our communities, it’s in our interests that we best position our returning neighbors for success.?

On behalf of Americans for Prosperity – Nevada and our over 50,000 activists, we humbly ask you to vote for AB 236.

Thank you.

Marcos Lopez

Field Director

Americans for Prosperity - Nevada

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