

-Mary Geraets - Dear Members of the Senate State Affairs Committee:

I am writing to urge your support for **SB124** and **SB204**—bills that offer responsible, common-sense solutions to the growing problems within the **South Dakota Department of Corrections (DOC)**. These measures represent an important step toward restoring checks and balances in a system that has operated without proper oversight for too long.

The issues within the DOC are serious and cannot be ignored. South Dakotans have watched with increasing concern as the department faces ongoing failures—extreme staffing shortages, the removal of vital rehabilitation programs like *Pups and Parolees* or the metal shop/collaborative work with Metalcraft Industries, and a lack of transparency that has allowed abuse, corruption, and mismanagement to flourish. **The department's failures are not just administrative—they impact real people.** We must remember that incarcerated individuals are still human beings deserving of dignity, care, and opportunities for rehabilitation.

Instead of throwing \$825 million into building a new 1,500-bed prison, we should focus on addressing the root causes of the DOC's issues. **SB124 and SB204 provide meaningful oversight and accountability, ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, and that South Dakotans have a stronger voice in how their government operates.** Simply expanding incarceration capacity without fixing the system's underlying problems will only perpetuate the cycle of neglect and abuse.

These bills represent a smarter, more compassionate approach—one that values transparency, responsible governance, and the well-being of all South Dakotans, including those incarcerated.

By supporting SB124 and SB204, you have the opportunity to prioritize solutions that work for the people, rather than sinking nearly a billion dollars into a system that isn't being held accountable.

I urge you to vote in favor of SB124 and SB204 to help ensure South Dakota builds a future grounded in **fairness, responsibility, and humanity.**

Thank you for your time and dedication to the people of South Dakota.

Respectfully, Mary Geraets , Canton, SD