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July 3, 2017

Dear Speaker Rendon,

I am a democratic member of the New Jersey Assembly representing Legislative District 1. Prior to joining the Assembly, I served in the Iraq War as a sergeant in the Army's 25th Infantry Division until my discharge following an injury which led to the amputation of my left leg from a grenade explosion in 2009. As a result, I was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star; my recovery was featured on a 2009 episode of The Oprah Winfrey Show.

As you may know, New Jersey passed and has implemented a bail reform policy similar to California's SB10 which you are considering. I supported the legislation when presented to our Assembly and advocated for its passage. The law went into effect this past January and it has been an absolute disaster. The public safety needs of citizens in New Jersey has suffered far greater than could have been imagined. The costs to the state have increased exponentially and, even worse, the constitutional rights of many of the accused are being infringed.

We were told that there would be no danger to citizens because the dangerous criminals would not be released and on "low level" criminals would be eligible. The reality is that dangerous and career criminals are released daily within hours of arrest. We should never have considered free bail to those who commit crimes where a citizen has been victimized. We may only catch a criminal once out of a multitude of crimes in which they commit. They are simply not afraid of committing crimes against citizens and as a result our crime rate has increased at least 13% since January. This law is victimizing law abiding citizens every day.

We were also misled as to the cost of implementation and continuation of this policy. It has become apparent to us now that the cost of incarcerating those held awaiting trial were greatly exaggerated. Additionally, we have transferred the cost of "free" bail to the taxpayer rather than the offender. The bail system supported many functions of the court and the cost of re-arresting multiple offenders and bail jumpers was borne by the offenders themselves rather than the taxpayers. Now we are making taxpayers pay to release criminals back into their neighborhoods and with no accountability. The state does not have the resources to properly monitor these people out on bail so we don't. This is a powder keg and our citizens are suffering because of it.

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Not only are our citizens suffering but now even the accused are being denied their constitutional right to pre-trial release as a result of the new laws. The eighth amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees an accused the right to "reasonable bail". However, in New Jersey, many are being denied that right. This is not just happening to dangerous criminals it is happening to low level offenders as well. The risk assessment system is simply not working. In January, a convicted child predator was arrested for attempting to lure a 12 year old girl to his house for "sexual things". The risk assessment determined he was not a threat and was released. The police chief of Little Egg Harbor was so distressed by this that he appealed the release all the way to our supreme court and was denied. The man was released back into the same neighborhood where the "would be" victim resides. The only recourse for law enforcement was to post on Facebook a warning to the community.

I am not "in the bag" of any industry or special interest. I fully thought this was the right thing to do because of the arguments we heard. I am writing to you because I have experienced this first hand and it has been a disaster. I am trying to rectify a problem in New Jersey that we caused and hopefully encourage you not to make the same mistake. Please listen to the experts on this issue and look at the examples before you because the safety and financial interests of your citizens are at stake. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Bob Andrzejczak  
Assemblyman, First Legislative District