

April 19, 2012

The Honorable Janice K. Brewer
Arizona Governor
Executive Tower
1700 W. Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor Brewer,

Although we are congregations and faith leaders of different denominations, we, the undersigned, are united in opposition to further prison privatization in Arizona. We join with those denominations and faith communities that have issued official statements against prison privatization, including the United Methodist Church USA, Presbyterian Church USA, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Bishops of the South, the Episcopal Church, and the United Church of Christ.

Specifically, we ask that you cancel the Request for Proposals for 2,000 additional private prison beds for the state of Arizona. In addition, we ask, in unison with faith leaders across the country, that you refuse the offer of the Corrections Corporation of America to privatize any state prisons. Third, we urge you to create accountability mechanisms for current private prisons in Arizona, including those contracted with other states and those contracted by the federal government. When state contracts expire, we ask that you do not renew them.

Below are a few of the myriad reasons we, as people of faith, oppose the practice of incarceration for profit:

1. **The primary issue is a moral one.** We do not support or condone privatization of prisons which have money-making as their goal, using punishment as the means. The Catholic Bishops of the South's statement of 2001 says "to delegate such acts to institutions whose success depends on the amount of profit they generate is to invite abuse and to abdicate our responsibility to care for our sisters and brothers."
2. **Prison privatization is contrary to core principles of forgiveness, loving our neighbors and welcoming the stranger.** It creates a disincentive to rehabilitate and reform prisoners in favor of long prison stays and high recidivism. It creates a marginalized group within our larger society.
3. **Mass incarceration is an assault on the sanctity of the family.** It destroys communities and undermines the family, the fundamental structure of our society. This is true for citizens who are serving time for criminal offenses as well

as those who are arrested and detained because they are suspected “illegal aliens.” Those arrests cause young children to be uncared for when parents are incarcerated. In single-parent families, the impact is even more devastating, with lasting effects.

4. **Prison privatization is a failed experiment.** It does not save money and does not increase public safety. There is no factual, criminological or penological justification for this practice. On the contrary, there are recent studies that show private prisons to be more costly than public ones and that prove that public safety is endangered by lax private prison security practices and poorly trained staff.

5. **Our scarce state resources are better invested in those areas we know make our society safer: education, substance abuse treatment, mental health and physical health care, and social services** that keep people out of the criminal justice system. These also reflect core values of faith communities.

We urge you to oppose the further privatization of prisons in Arizona.

Blessings,

Pima Friends Meeting (Quakers)
Tucson, AZ

Islamic Inmates Corrections Association of America,
Imam Sidney Sharif
Tucson, AZ

Southside Presbyterian Church
Pastor Alison Harrington
Tucson, AZ

Arizona Half-yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers)
Comprised of Friends Meetings in Phoenix, Tempe, Tucson, and Flagstaff

The Reverend M. Douglas Bobbitt
United Methodist Church, retired
Tucson, AZ

The Reverend Nancy Nelson Elsenheimer
Beatitudes United Church of Christ
Phoenix, AZ

The Reverend Ted Elsenheimer
Beatitudes United Church of Christ
Phoenix, AZ

Leo Guardado, Minister of Social Justice
Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church
Phoenix, AZ

The Reverend Ed Hunt
Presbyterian Church of American, retired
Green Valley, AZ

The Reverend Harvey R. Kemp
United Methodist Church, retired
Tucson, AZ

The Reverend Doctor Wallace Ryan Kuroiwa, Ph.D., Interim Pastor,
Church of the Painted Hills United Church of Christ
Tucson, AZ

The Reverend Randy Mayer
The Good Shepherd United Church of Christ
Sahuarita, AZ

The Reverend James B. Nelson,
United Church of Christ, retired
Professor of Christian Ethics, United Theological Seminary of Twin Cities, MN, retired
Tucson, AZ

The Reverend Phil Reller
Justice and Witness
Southwest Conference United Church of Christ

Fr. Bill Rimmel, SDS
Most Holy Trinity Parish
Tucson, AZ

The Reverend George Tolman
Disciples of Christ, retired
Tucson, AZ

The Reverend Steve Van Kuiken
Rincon United Church of Christ
Tucson, AZ

The Reverend Dr. David Wilkinson, Pastor
St. Francis in the Foothills United Methodist Church
Tucson, AZ

Rev. Dr. Frank R. Williams
United Methodist Church
Tucson, AZ