



Damon T. Hininger
President and CEO
CoreCivic Facility Support Center

February 13, 2020

Vice Mayor Jim Shulman and the Metropolitan Council
Historic Metro Courthouse
One Public Square, Suite 204
Nashville, TN 37219-630

Dear Vice Mayor Shulman and Metropolitan Council:

I want to reach out to you about the Metro Council-led legislation (BL2020-148) to be considered on February 13 that proposes to prohibit any future private contracts to operate, manage or lease detention facilities in Metro Nashville. Since 1992, our company, CoreCivic, has cared for Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) inmates from our local area at the Metro-Davidson County Detention Facility. Our company has also been part of the Middle Tennessee community for more than 35 years.

Unfortunately, as is too often the case in today's public arena, this proposal is driven by an ideological activism rather than personal experience or knowledge about our company or the quality, effective services that we provide with our government partners. Its supporters don't understand the value we provide to Nashville, or the commitment we have to those in our care, our staff and our community. Most have never set foot in the Metro facility. For those with an open mind and genuine interest to learn more, I want to be clear: our door is open to you.

Let me share a little more about what we do. First and foremost, we're committed to those in our care. We know the individuals at our Metro facility will return to citizen life in our community, and we do everything possible during their stay in our care to prepare them to be successful when they are released. For example, we work with Nashville's own Men of Valor (MOV) on an intensive, faith-based program that offers inmates education, mentoring, fellowship and even transitional housing and job readiness training. In fact, CoreCivic Metro was the first facility - private or public - to open its doors to MOV. For those who elect to participate, the potential is transformative: The recidivism rate for those who complete the program is consistently at or below 15 percent; statewide, for comparison, the recidivism rate is closer to 50 percent.

Other opportunities we offer to those in our care at the Metro facility include victim impact and anger management programs, Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous, and a Residential Drug Abuse Treatment Program. We've got additional faith-based programs called Healing Journeys and Life Principles. Training and caring for rescue animals helps our inmates learn and grow through the Second Chances and Paws Greyhound programs. Incarcerated individuals can get critical job skills in adult basic education, cosmetology, computer and HVAC classes. They can also learn parenting skills and how to better manage their finances. We have extraordinary music programs, partnering with accomplished musicians like Mark Collie to infuse music with effective reentry programming. The list goes on.

All of these potentially life-changing services are delivered by 215 dedicated employees, including teachers, counselors and officers at the Metro facility – people who live and work right here in Nashville. Another 455 work at our headquarters in Brentwood, many of whom live in Metro Nashville. And sharing examples of the meaningful outcomes yielded from their efforts, over the past five years, Metro has helped 198 inmates complete their GED and 359 inmates received industry-recognized certifications (IRC). These outcomes are significant, as a landmark 2013 study by the RAND Corporation¹ found that inmates who participate in education programs on average have 43 percent lower odds of returning to prison than those who do not, and those who obtain GEDs while in prison are up to 30 percent less likely to return to prison.

Having started with our company as an hourly correctional officer nearly 30 years ago and seeing firsthand our impact in communities every day since, I'm personally very proud of our charitable support of Nashville-area organizations. Over the past decade, we've given more than \$11 million to organizations helping former offenders, victims of crime and underserved youth such as Men of Valor, Dismas House, The Next Door, You Have the Power, Boys and Girls Clubs of Middle Tennessee, and many more. At a broader corporate level, we've worked to transparently detail how we deliver on our service commitments to our government partners and manage our operations responsibly and ethically in a first-of-its-kind ESG report.²

In short, we're committed to the people in our care, and we believe at our core in making a difference in our community. We have for decades.

Before I close, I want to briefly address the per diem rate CoreCivic has with TDOC to operate the Metro facility. There is some confusion as to why the rate is higher than what county jails are paid. Metro is not a jail. At Metro, we're caring for long-term inmates who benefit from robust, evidence-based reentry programs like those I described. Conversely, jails are designed to hold individuals for a short period of time while they await placement in a TDOC facility. As a result, jails don't offer the breadth of programming or services that we do through the TDOC contract. These offerings are critical for the future success of longer-term inmates, and require additional staff and resources to provide. Additionally, the Metro contract has always been awarded through a competitive procurement process, which is open to all qualified bidders.

On February 13, I urge you to vote against this proposal. To this point, it appears the legislative action has been free of facts and ideologically driven, and that's not a manner in which good public policy is developed. In this case, the Council should take great caution with what is proposed because if approved it would be potentially diminishing inmates' access to life-changing re-entry programming. Support for this proposal is a choice to play politics with people's lives rather than work toward meaningful change. We stand ready to partner with anyone who wants to enact real solutions to help the men and women of our community break the cycle of crime, but this proposal will do nothing toward that end. I'll close by re-issuing my

¹ https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html

² <https://www.corecivic.com/hubfs/files/2018-ESGReport.pdf>



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initial offer to the Metro Council that our door is always open if you want to see operations performed at the Metro-Davidson County Detention Facility and understand how our work with TDOC, through partnership with the Davidson County Sheriff Office, is helping changes lives. Thank you for your time and your service to our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D. T. Hininger".

Damon T. Hininger
President and Chief Executive Officer

Cc: The Honorable Sheriff Daron Hall, DCSO
The Honorable John Cooper, Mayor of Nashville
The Honorable Justin Wilson, Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury