**WRFR FM COMMUNITY RADIO** 93.3 FM Rockland // 99.3 FM Camden Office: 207-594-0721 – Call-in line: 207-593-0013

March 28, 2011

Brandon M. Thongsavanh # 364054 MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution 1153 East Street, South Suffield , CT 06080

Dear Mr.Thongsavanh

This is an update on the progress of our bill LD 690 to reform Mainer inmate transfer, and to continue asking for your help in getting the best results. Thank you for your letter to the legislators. On March 23rd, I and a Maine state legislator Ralph Chapman and the parents of another interstate compact transferred Mainer had a meeting with new Maine DOC Commissioner Joseph Ponte. Several things came out of it:

* Ponte seems to be surprised that transfers ever last more than a year (except for personal safety transfers). We showed him the proof. He is willing to develop a written return policy that would require that a “case management plan“ be prepared in every case, with clear description of how to get returned as quickly as possible. With nobody shipped out long term except personal safety and health transfers.
* Ponte opposes the bill AS WRITTEN. He doesn’t giving up any power with the courts. He made a counter offer. Ponte agrees that Maine’s lack of a return plan for each compact transfer is not acceptable. If the bill requires that every DOC interstate compact decision includes a return plan with measureable good behavior metrics, to bring them home, then he could support it. But not the go-directly-to-court system of the bill.
* What do you think? Can that kind of policy get written. Weaker that the bill, but better than present situation? This is where you come in. If you can come up with ideas on how that policy should be worded, please send them to us. What checks and balances in it. This in addition to your letter to the legislators will make some waves.
* As soon as possible, since we want to get this bill out by late April at latest. We’ll be meeting every week with Ponte or whoever he taps to work on this, so your ideas and facts on what is wrong with the transfer system and how it could be straightened out, will get a serious look, whether plain and simple or complicated.
* **Ponte refused our attempted delivery** of your and two other prisoner’s letters authorizing me and M-PAC to review your records. He said that because of the significance of this public access to Department of Corrections files, **he wants the letters sent him again,** **but this time with your signatures notarized**.  Ponte said every prison has notary public available free to prisoners. This supposedly removes any possible question as to the actual source of the letters, and covers his back. **Even though it’s a hassle, could you please do that?** I enclose a copy of your original authorizing letter. Just rewrite it, get it stamped by the notary and ship it out again.

I am terribly sorry about this surprise with your letter consenting to us reviewing your records, and the need to get a new one sent with a notary stamp. Please do this if you can, and send it to me at the same address: Ron Huber, WRFR Community Radio, 20 Gay Street, Rockland ME 04841. I’ll make a copy and pass Ponte the original. My corrections show Weekend Roundtable airs every Saturday 1pm-2pm on the web at [www.wrfr.org](http://www.wrfr.org)

Also your ideas on what to include and what NOT to include in an interstate compact return policy that we can incorporate into the bill. What kind of fail-safes in the policy to put an end to Mainers being left out in other states and their appeals to return ignored or turned down without reason good enough to justify the family-breaking effect of prolonged exile.

Sincerely

Ron Huber, producer WRFR Community Radio

Member of M-PAC

The parents of an interstate compact, & I and a legislator met with new Maine DOC Commissioner Joseph Ponte on Wednesday March 23rd. Purpose was the bill LD 690 to require return of Mainer prisoners after one year

Several important things came out of it:

* Ponte is willing to develop a written interstate compact “return policy”. It is due to the lack of one in Maine’s DOC that the bill LD 690 was written. If he comes up with a good solid policy, we may accept that instead of the wording of the bill, since DOC will fight pretty hard against the bill as written. To make sure that they come up with a decent policy, we (M-PAC) are going to be involved in making sure the policy that gets developed makes sense. Ponte seems to think it would be straightforward, based on “good behavior” reports from the out of state prison. Therefore I ask for your ideas of what should be in such a policy? Can the state that interstate compacted prisoners are held in be trusted to give honest reports to Maine? What are the details that aren’t apparent to us from outside the walls that make a difference, so that it gets added as a safewguard into the Maine state prison policy on interstate compact returns.
* Ponte deflected our attempted delivery of your and another prisoner’s letters authorizing me and M-PAC to review your records. He said that because of the significance of this public access to Department of Corrections files, **he wants the letters sent him again,** **but this time with your signatures notarized**.  Ponte said every prison has more than one notary public available to prisoners as a free service, and that this would not be a burden. No cost. This notarizing supposedly removing any possible question as to the actual source of the letters. This apparently is based on something that happened in the past at one of the other prisons he ran. Even though it’s a hassle, could you please do that? I enclose a copy of your authorizing letter. Just rewrite it, get it stamped by the notary and ship it out again.
* Your parents did an excellent job communicating to the commissioner why this no-return-date policy has to end. Its not an abstraction; its about people suffering from a dumb policy, and yet slogging on, refusing to give up on their son. They, and you, are going to be featured in the upcoming weekend edition of the Bangor Daily News about this issue. I can’t promise the reporter is going to be 100% sympathetic but I think she’ll be fair, which is just as good.
* Ponte came across as very much opposed to any organized civil protests by prisoners . Seemed to see such as compacting-worth. Something we shall try to straighten him out about. In maine unlike most states, prisonsers can vote, can do many political things. This ain’t Kansas, toto.

I am terribly sorry about the surprise with your letter of authorization, and the need to get a new one sent with a notary stamp. Please do this if you can, and send it to me at the same address: WRFR Community Radio, 20 Gay Street, Rockland ME 04841. Also your thoughts on what to include and what NOT to include in an interstate compact return policy.

Sincerely

Ron Huber, producer WRFR Community Radio

Member of M-PAC