

Executive Order No.1-68, A Humane Necessity

An anxious, frightened man shudders as he is escorted into his frigid, dry jail cell where he will be spending the next 6 months. Tears flow from his eyes as he thinks about his children who will spend many months fatherless and his wife who will have to support a new household and the needy children alone. A family is torn apart and in shambles during a terrible pandemic, all because of a father driving with a suspended license to get to work on time. It is because of avoiding disastrous and unjustified situations such as this due to minor misdemeanors that I whole-heartedly support Executive Order No. 1-68.

The first reason I support this order is due to it being the most beneficial method of handling minor offenses as it allows for the offender to truly take responsibility and improve from their actions for the future. As opposed to simply avoiding the issue by throwing the person into a jail cell, the order allows the offender to face responsibility and truly learn from these offenses as to not commit them in the future. Mayor Sylvester Turner describes Executive Order No. 1-68 as “a more humane way to handle low-level offenders because the program allows them to face responsibility for their actions” (Turner 2020). Allowing offenders to take this responsibility for their actions is the most beneficial long-term solution to reducing future infringements as it addresses the root cause of crime. Additionally, Benjamin Harris and Kearney of the Brookings institute find that “rates of crime and incarceration disproportionately impact low-income and minority communities” (Harris and Kearney 2014). It is crucial that we allow these young people from less fortunate backgrounds to learn that their actions are wrong, but that isn’t possible through imprisonment. The order is the essential key to allowing these people, often young, mistreated, and confused, to redeem themselves instead of immediately giving them jail time that will not positively change them for the future.

The next reason I support this order is that the jail time prior to its passing would impose unjustified and inhumane costs on the families of the offenders. The Human Toll of Jail cites that “more than 1.1 million men and 120,000 women in U.S. jails and prisons have children under the age of 17” (Human Toll of Jail 2016). Millions of children each day have to return home fatherless or motherless, a nonsensical consequence that the child should not have to face over a minor infringement on the part of their parent. Not to mention the enormous strain that a single parent has to bear when they take care of a household along with the constant anxiety of their partner being locked in a dangerous prison environment. As opposed to how it may seem, the implications of this are extremely expansive and perpetuates “a cycle of lagging opportunities and resources for entire communities” (Human Toll of Jail 2016). Why should a family or community be forced into months of debilitating hardship with long term harms over something as miniscule as minor graffiti? Executive Order No. 1-68 crucially allows the responsibility to be solely on the shoulders of the offender and gives them the ability to support their families once they take sufficient responsibility.

The final reason for my support of this order is that incarceration for minor offenses inflicts irreversible psychological damage on young people who are undeserving and unprepared for the state of prison. People serving prison time are, as described by Craig Haney on behalf of the U.S Department of Health and Human Services ASPE, subject to “literal and psychological isolation of prison from the surrounding community” (Haney 2001). As a result of this, the immature and unprepared offenders are then forced to “retreat deeply into themselves, trust virtually no one, and adjust to prison stress by leading isolated lives of quiet desperation” (Haney 2001). Absent this order, thousands of young, naïve people have to bear this near-depressive psychological state for the rest of their lives due to a miniscule infringement that they committed

out of the juvenile immaturity that all people have. Incarcerating these young and unknowing individuals in the same facilities as murderers, rapists, and other felons is a scarring experience that they will never learn from or accept. Those in opposition of the order must ask themselves if the literal psychological demolition of our youth is something really worth risking when we have better alternatives.

In conclusion, Executive Order No. 1-68 is an order I support due to its adherence to moral code as well as its necessity to reduce the suffering of undeserving people. The order is the only thing protecting millions of torn families, preventing the psychological torture of young offenders, holding back the shutdown of hope in the future.

References/Bibliographical Citations

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