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Sen. William Brownsberger, Co-chair
Sex Offender Recidivism Commission
Room 504, State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Sen. Brownsberger:

You showed some interest when I mentioned the Circles of Support and Accountability that are used in Canada and to reduce the reduce the recidivism of sex offenders. Indeed, the two studies described in the enclosed material reduced sexual reoffending by 70% and by 83%. The circles started in Canada but are now being used in other countries. Minnesota and a few other states have COSA projects. Vermont is using circles with a variety of offenders, including those charged with sexual crimes.

I became familiar with the COSA model when I was the lead organizer for two conferences in 2007 on sex offending, one for social workers and other professionals and one, along with Boston Theological Institute, for church leaders. We had Robin Wilson, Ph.D., who was running the civil commitment program for the state of Florida, as our keynote speaker. Dr. Wilson had been a psychologist with the Correctional Service of Canada, was instrumental in setting up the first circle in the 1990's and since then has been engaged in research and consultation as circles have spread in Canada and now internationally. See the enclosed material from his website.

Before this Commission concludes its work, I highly recommend that bringing this approach to Massachusetts be discussed. I have an excellent DVD, which contains three short videos of actual circles in operation — each about 10 minutes. I would love to send it to you to see and decide if you'd like to show it to the group. Give me a call or shoot me an email.

Sincerely yours,


Roswitha M. Winsor, LICSW

cc. Rep. Paul Brodeur