



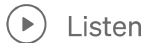
# The Power of Your Advocacy



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*By Daniel Landsman*

Last week, my wonderful colleague Alexia Pitter reflected on the perspective of our [FAMMily](#) in light of the United States Sentencing Commission's pending vote to apply recent guideline changes to criminal history retroactively.

I am happy to say that the United States Sentencing Commission voted to make retroactive their recent guideline amendments related to criminal history. This is a big

a victory — as a result of this vote, over 18,000 people could receive an average of 14 to 15 months off of their sentence.

This would not be possible without the advocacy and unique perspectives of our FAMMily. Don't believe me? Take it from Judge Carlton Reeves, the Chair of the United States Sentencing Commission:

*“A policy that results in a little over a year in average sentence reduction, to some, may seem minor. But to those who spent time in prison or who have loved someone who has there is nothing minor, in my view, about a year's worth of freedom...”*

*The commission heard as much from a number of formerly incarcerated people. As one said, ‘every single day I receive off my sentence puts me one day closer to my family.’ As another said, ‘any amount of reduction that could get me closer to seeing my father before he passes. Possibly seeing my son graduate high school. Or even getting to watch my son get married would mean the world to me.’ And as a third person, whose father was recently diagnosed with brain cancer told us, ‘what would an additional year with my father mean to me? I lack the words to explain what comfort a single additional hug would bring to him or I.’”*

The perspective of formerly and currently incarcerated individuals served as a focal point of Chair Reeves' remarks before the successful vote. The United States Sentencing Commission hears from a lot of people through the course of the amendment process. They hear from U.S. attorneys, federal judges, policy nerds like me, and countless other stakeholders. Judge Reeves' remarks confirmed what our FAMMily has long known: there is no substitute for the lived experience of people most impacted by our justice system.

This is why we challenge law makers to [#visitaprison](#). This is why our FAMMily members travel from all over the country to spend a week walking the halls of Congress advocating urgent bills like the EQUAL Act and the Federal Prison Oversight Act. To truly understand the impact of laws passed in D.C. and state capitols across the country, policy makers must meet with and listen to those directly impacted.

So thank you. Thank you for the countless phone calls you have put in to lawmakers. Thank you for the countless meetings you have taken. Thank you for sharing your experiences with us.

Together we can continue to bring about meaningful reform to our nation's criminal justice system.

*Daniel Landsman is FAMM's Deputy Director of Policy.*

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