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Jan 2024

December 10th, 2025

To: Whom it may concern

From: Captain Laura Grasser, Rutherford County Sheriff's Office

CC: Sheriff Aaron Ellenburg, Major Andrew Greenway, Lieutenant Beth Sprouse

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to respectfully request the creation of a dedicated **line item for Inmate Education** be added within the Rutherford County Detention Center's budget. This line item would formally establish and sustain an educational program designed to reduce recidivism, strengthen reentry outcomes, and ultimately lower long-term costs to the county.

I am pleased to share that the Detention Center has already received a **\$2,000 private donation** to initiate this program. This generous support demonstrates community confidence in our efforts and provides a strong foundation upon which we can build. However, for the program to be effective and sustainable, it requires formal recognition and budgetary structure through an assigned line item.

Why Inmate Education Is Critical

Extensive research and correctional best practices show that expanding educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals significantly reduces recidivism. When inmates gain basic academic skills, vocational capabilities, or structured life-skills training, they are far more likely to achieve stability upon release. Education increases employability, improves decision-making, and strengthens self-confidence—factors directly linked to successful reintegration.

Without these opportunities, many individuals leave incarceration with the same barriers that contributed to their initial offenses: lack of education, limited employment prospects, and minimal coping skills. These barriers increase the likelihood of reoffending, resulting in higher incarceration costs, greater strain on law enforcement resources, and long-term impacts on community safety.

Benefits to Rutherford County

Creating a formal education program will:

- **Reduce repeat incarcerations**, lowering operational and housing costs over time.
- **Improve inmate behavior**, as structured programming has been shown to reduce disciplinary incidents.
- **Strengthen workforce readiness**, helping returning citizens become productive members of the local economy.



- **Build community partnerships**, since outside organizations and donors are more willing to support a formally recognized initiative.
- **Enhance public safety**, the ultimate goal for all of us serving Rutherford County.

A Sustainable Path Forward

The initial donation provides a meaningful start, but a county budget line item will ensure transparency, proper allocation of future donations or grants, and compliance with financial tracking standards. A designated line item also signals the county's commitment to proactive, evidence-based approaches to reducing recidivism—an investment that yields substantial social and financial returns.

I am committed to developing a program that reflects the county's values, uses resources responsibly, and produces measurable outcomes. With the Board's support, we can create a lasting framework that benefits both the individuals in our custody and the broader community.

Thank you for considering this request and for your continued support of the Rutherford County Detention Center. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal in more detail at your convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura J. Grasser".

Captain Laura Grasser
Rutherford County Detention Center
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Rutherfordton, NC 28139