

July 5, 2024

July 9, 2024 (rev.)

RN 24 52058

MEMBER'S RESOLUTION

By the Honorable Gregg Hart, 37th Assembly District;

Relative to commending

THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE PROJECT

WHEREAS, The Freedom to Choose Project is celebrating its twentieth anniversary, and it is appropriate at this time to highlight its many achievements and underscore the positive impact it has made in the State of California; and

WHEREAS, Launched in March 2004 as a personal service project by Dr. David Paul and Dr. Bonnie Paul, with its first workshop hosted at the facility then known as Valley State Prison for Women, The Freedom to Choose Project is an educational nonprofit organization that teaches skills in a unique and highly effective educational format, and its participants can apply that

learning to transform their lives away from a culture of violence or addiction to become productive and positive influencers in their families and communities; and

WHEREAS, Having quickly gained popularity with its incarcerated participants, many of whom demonstrated positive changes in behaviors and attitudes and established reconnections with their family members, The Freedom to Choose Project built up a waiting list following its first workshop and soon became widely known across the State of California; and

WHEREAS, Over the past 20 years, The Freedom to Choose Project has expanded its reach to offer programs at the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility and State Prison, Corcoran; Valley State Prison; Folsom State Prison; California Men's Colony; Central California Women's Facility; California Institution for Women; California City Correctional Facility; and California State Prison, Los Angeles County, with a planned launch at the California Rehabilitation Center in November 2024; and

WHEREAS, Relying on the dedication of its robust team of more than 700 volunteers, who have donated 95,800 hours to the program, The Freedom to Choose Project has served nearly 7,000 incarcerated individuals through more than 218,000 hours of educational instruction, which is offered in both English and

Spanish, and while its participants have demonstrated a 91 percent reduction in conflict during and after incarceration, 52 percent of its graduates have since been released from prison; and

WHEREAS, In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Freedom to Choose Project created a correspondence curriculum that could be mailed to its incarcerated participants, who then returned their responses so program volunteers could review their ideas and provide encouraging feedback, and that correspondence program has since expanded to include every California state prison along with other facilities, such as the Santa Barbara County Jail; and

WHEREAS, The Freedom to Choose Project has evolved into a leader in the field of prison rehabilitative programs and services, and through the dedicated work of its staff and volunteers, it has dramatically improved the quality of life of its participants and the greater community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY ASSEMBLY MEMBER GREGG HART, That The Freedom to Choose Project be congratulated on the celebration of its twentieth anniversary, commended for the vital role it has played in supporting rehabilitation and reducing recidivism for incarcerated individuals in the State of California, and extended best wishes for continued success in the years to come.

Dated this 1st day of March, 2024.

Honorable Gregg Hart  
37th Assembly District