



Lawmaker Spends Birthday With Inmates at CMCF

PEARL – There are some birthdays that you'll always remember.

This year, I had the honor of spending my birthday at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility, [Mississippi Department of Corrections](#) serving as the keynote speaker for the first Behavioral Management Unit (BMU) graduation.

As I stood there and shook the hand of each of the 12 graduates, I didn't just see inmates. I saw human beings who made the decision to confront their struggles, put in the work, and take the first steps toward changing their lives. That moment reminded me that rehabilitation is not just a talking point. It is real. It is possible. And it is worth investing in.

I shared one message with each graduate: recovery is a lifelong journey made one decision at a time. Completing this program is not the finish line, it is the starting point. I challenged them to come back for their GED, enroll in workforce development and vocational programs, continue their education, and never stop believing that their future can be greater than their past.

I also want to recognize the incredible people who make this work possible every day. The peer support specialists, field ministers, teachers, instructors, mental health professionals, correctional staff, and everyone who chooses to see potential where others may only see mistakes. They are changing lives, one person at a time, and their work deserves our gratitude and respect.

A special thank you to Superintendent Matt Reynolds for his leadership. From the first time we met, I believed he was the right person for this role. While no correctional facility is perfect, there is no denying that meaningful progress is taking place at CMCF. That progress is the result of dedicated leadership and a team that believes rehabilitation should be more than a word; it should be a mission. Every person is more than the worst decision they've ever made. Accountability matters, but so does redemption. If we truly want safer communities, we must create opportunities for people to return home as better fathers, better mothers, better neighbors, and better citizens.

Leaving CMCF on my birthday, I didn't feel like I had given the graduates a gift.

They gave one to me.

They reminded me why I fight for meaningful criminal justice reform, why I believe in second chances, and why hope should never be locked behind prison walls.

I will never stop being a champion for rehabilitation, redemption, and the belief that lives can change.

