

July 27, 2011

Dear Senator,

As faith-based and community organizations and individuals, we write in strong support of S. 1231, the *Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2011*.

Many of us were part of the diverse coalition of the more than 200 groups that supported and worked on the Second Chance Act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law in April 2007. We believe this was a significant first step toward creating a more just criminal justice system and safer communities.

Since its passage, over 250 Second Chance grants have been awarded to community and faith-based organizations, and to state, local and tribal governments spanning almost every state in the country, all to improve public safety and reduce recidivism by helping offenders reintegrate into their communities.

But there is much work still to be done. We believe that our treatment of the least fortunate in this society is a critical part of our faith and, unfortunately, most of the more than 700,000 individuals who return to our communities from state and federal prisons each year remain in this category. Too few of them are prepared for their release or receive any support, and many suffer from chronic health problems, have no housing, little education or job training, and generally lack the supportive services needed for a successful re-entry. As a result, 68 percent of them will be rearrested, and more than half will return to prison within three years of their release. We can and must do better.

To improve current law, Senators Patrick Leahy and Rob Portman recently introduced S 1231, the *Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2011*. The bill is designed to increase public safety and strengthen families by consolidating grants, making reentry programs more efficient and accountable, and providing offenders with additional incentives to participate in rigorous recidivism reduction programs. Further, it will reduce overcrowding and costs within the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Among some of the key provisions of the Second Chance Reauthorization Act, the bill will:

- Provide support for planning and implementation of key reentry projects to ensure that those projects use methods proven through testing and review to lead to meaningful reductions in recidivism rates;
- Consolidate the Reentry Courts Program and the Prosecution Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison Program into one grant program with multiple uses to ensure that federal dollars are effectively spent;
- Create an incentive for inmates to participate in rigorous recidivism reduction programming by awarding a credit of up to 60 days per year toward completion of their sentence for participation in such programs;

- Repeal several programs that have not been funded or have been completed;
- Require periodic audits of grantees to ensure that federal dollars are responsibly spent; grantees with problematic audits will not be eligible for funding in future years.

For these reasons, we urge you to support and pass S. 1231 as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

ORGANIZATIONS

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

THE ALEPH INSTITUE

AMERICAN BAPTIST HOME MISSION SOCIETIES

CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN, GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

DISCIPLES JUSTICE ACTION NETWORK

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

HEALING COMMUNITIES

INSTITUTE ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC POLICY

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS (ISKCON)

JEWISH COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER OF THE SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF FAITH AND JUSTICE

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS

NETWORK, A NATIONAL CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE LOBBY

ORTHODOX UNION

PRISON FELLOWSHIP

SATMAR INSTITUTIONS

UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

UNITED JEWISH COMMUNITY ADVOCACY RELATIONS AND ENRICHMENT

UNITED JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS OF WILLIAMSBURG

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Individuals

Tom Minnery
Executive Director
CitizenLink (policy affiliate of Focus on the Family)

Greg Mitchell
President
The Mitchell Firm

Issac Rosenberg
Vice President
Congregation Yetev Lev

Moshe Vizel
Director of Community Affairs
United Talmudical Academy of NY