

PASS THE SECOND CHANCE ACT

October 31, 2005

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
433 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Specter and Senator Leahy:

We very much appreciate your support of the bipartisan *Second Chance Act* (S.1934). As you well know, this legislation will increase public safety by reducing recidivism among the more than 650,000 persons who reenter society each year from prisons and the thousands more who return from jails. It is a direct response to President Bush's 2004 State of Union Address which called for action when he said, "[w]e know from long experience that if they can't find work, or a home, or help, they are much more likely to commit crime and return to prison."

Momentum to improve the nation's response to people leaving incarceration has been building dramatically over the last two years. Following the President's leadership, the Department of Justice, last year, organized a national conference on reentry addressed by the Attorney General and two other cabinet members. Interest in that conference among criminal justice professionals and reentry organizations was so high that registration had to be closed weeks before the conference began. Earlier this year, the Council of State Government published a major "Report of the Re-Entry Policy Council: Charting the Safe and Successful Return of Prisoners to the Community." The National Association of Counties and the United States Conference of Mayors' Center for Faith-based and Community Initiatives have also focused recently on prisoner reentry. The National Governor's Association established a Prisoner Reentry Policy Academy and last month published an important issue brief on "Improving Prisoner Reentry Through Strategic Policy Innovations," which we have enclosed.

With the leadership of federal, state, and local government, and strong commitments from the criminal justice and law enforcement community, as well as from those who work on substance abuse treatment, family and child welfare, education, employment, family violence prevention, community corrections, housing, mentoring and disability rights, the current high recidivism rates can be substantially reduced, providing a better investment of scarce public funds.

Passage of the *Second Chance Act* (S.1934) this fall is urgently needed to ensure that the reentry reforms that began under President Bush's leadership, move forward and begin to touch the thousands who are returning to our communities every day.

We know that the Judiciary Committee has a number of important issues to consider before adjournment. We urge you to do all you can to pass the *Second Chance Act* (S.1934) this fall. Please know that we stand ready to assist you in any way possible.

Thank you for your continued efforts to reduce recidivism and improve public safety by strengthening institutional and community reentry programs. Passage of the *Second Chance Act* (S.1934) will better protect our communities by working towards a more effective, rational, and cost-effective correctional system. Again, your leadership on this critically important issue is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Access Community Health Network
(Chicago)

Addictions Coalition of Delaware, Inc.

AdvoCare, Inc., Hancock, MD

All of Us or None Oklahoma

Alvis House, Inc., Columbus, OH

American Catholic Correctional Chaplains
Association

American Conservative Union

American Correctional Association

American Correctional Chaplains

Association

American Jail Association

American Probation and Parole Association

Anderson Professional Training Services

ATTIC Corrections Services, Inc., Madison,
WI

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

BOP Watch

Broward County Regional Project Safe
Neighborhoods Task Force, Ft.
Lauderdale, FL

Call To Do Justice

Center for Community Alternatives

Center for Community Corrections,
Syracuse, NY

Center for Public Justice

Changin' Lives, Sugarland, TX

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

Child Welfare League of America

Christian Coalition

Church Council of Greater Seattle

Coalition of Community Corrections
Providers-New Jersey

Coalition to End Homelessness, Ft.
Lauderdale, FL

Concerned Citizens Coalition, Front Royal,
VA

Criminon International

Delaware Center for Justice, Inc.

East Bay Community Law Center, Berkeley,
CA

East County One Stop, OR

FAAM – Utah Chapter

Family Justice, New York, NY

Family Service Agency, AZ

Federal Defense Associates, Santa Ana, CA

Federal Prison Policy Project

Friends and Family of Incarcerated Persons,
Las Vegas, NV

Goodwill Industries International

HARP (Housing Assistance and Resource
Program), Lebanon, PA

Haymarket Center (Chicago)

Indiana Citizens United for Rehabilitation of
Errants

International Community Corrections
Association

Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Prisoner
Reentry Program

Jewish Prisoner Services International
Johnson Institute

Justice Fellowship

Kids First Coalition

Legal Action Center

Marion County Reentry Court, Indianapolis,
IN

Menonite Central Committee Washington
Office

NAACP Legal Defense & Educational
Fund, Inc.

NAADAC – The Association for Addiction
Professionals

National Alliance of Faith and Justice

National Alliance to End Homelessness

National Association of State Alcohol and
Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)

National Associations of Counties

National Citizens United for Rehabilitation
of Errants (CURE)

National Coalition of Full Opportunity for
Felons (NCFOF)

National Committee on Community
Corrections

National Correctional Industries Association

National Council for Community Behavioral
Healthcare

National Council of La Raza

National HIRE Network

National Law Center on Homelessness &
Poverty

National Low Income Housing Coalition

National Network for Youth

National Re-Entry Resource Center

National TASC

National Transitional Jobs Network	Second Chance Ready4Work, Memphis, TN
National Urban League	Sentencing Project
New Jersey Community Corrections Association	Society For Return To Honor, AZ
New York Therapeutic Communities, Inc. (Stay'n Out)	Southend Community Services/Our Piece of the Pie, Hartford, CT
Noisette Foundation, N. Charleston, SC	STEPS To End Family Violence, New York, NY
Office of the Appellate Defender in New York	Students for Sensible Drug Policy
Our Daughters & Sons Support Group, Newport News, VA	The Alston Wilkes Society, Columbia, SC
Pacific Mountain WorkSource	The Bronx Defenders
Pioneer Human Services, WA	The United States Conference of Mayors
Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office	The Wilberforce Forum
Prison Fellowship	Therapeutic Communities of America
Prison Ministry and Criminal Justice Commission of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.	Transitional Living Centers, Inc., PA
Prisons Foundation	TurnAround Village, LA
Prosser-Truth Division #456, UNIA-ACL Public/Private Ventures	UrbaneKnights
Resource Information Help for the Disadvantage (RIHD, Inc.)	Virginia CURE
Restoration Enterprises, Redding, CA	Virginia CURE, Blacksburg Chapter
Safer Foundation, Chicago, IL	Virginia CURE, Lebanon Chapter
Seattle Ready4Work	Volunteers of America
	Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
	Word of Hope Ministries, Inc., Milwaukee, WI

cc: Members, Committee on the Judiciary
enc: “Improving Prisoner Reentry Through Strategic Policy Innovations,” NGA Center for Best Practices