

February 1, 2005

The Honorable Sam Brownback
303 Senate Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Brownback:

As leading organizations representing the fields of positive youth development, juvenile justice, and delinquency prevention, we write to express our support for the bi-partisan Second Chance Act. This legislation recognizes that reentry is the juvenile justice system's weakest and often missing link in the service continuum for youthful offenders.

Each year, approximately 100,000 juveniles leave juvenile correctional facilities, and state and federal prisons. Too many youth are released from secured facilities or other out-of-home placements without access to appropriate aftercare services and other supports that would assist them in successfully reintegrating back into their community. Without aftercare, youth are more likely to recidivate and more likely to experience other negative outcomes, such as abuse, unemployment, poor health, and homelessness.

The Second Chance Act is an important first step toward reducing the unacceptably high recidivism rate among juveniles. The legislation expands comprehensive reentry efforts, both before and after release, which can substantially reduce the likelihood of recidivism among juvenile offenders. The legislation authorizes assistance to states and localities to develop and implement strategic plans for providing and coordinating comprehensive efforts to enable ex-offenders to successfully reenter their communities. Such efforts include access to supports and services such as family reunification, job training, education, housing, substance abuse and mental health services.

Thank you for including youth reentry as an integral part of the Second Chance Act. We look forward to working with you on this important legislation when it is reintroduced in the 109th Congress.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Correctional Association
American Counseling Association
American Psychological Association
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
Catholic Charities USA
Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice
Children's Defense Fund
Child Welfare League of America
Church Women United

Covenant House
Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
Learning Disabilities Association of America
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association of School Psychology
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Network for Youth
National Religious Affairs Association of NABCJ
Physicians for Human Rights
Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office
School Social Work Association of America
Volunteers of America
Women of Reform Judaism
Youth Law Center