

April 24, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
1233 Longworth Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
235 Cannon Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte  
2309 Rayburn Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler  
2109 Rayburn Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, Chairman Goodlatte, and Ranking Member Nadler:

We are writing to voice our support for the Prison Reform and Redemption Act of 2017 (H.R.3356), introduced by Rep. Collins (GA) and Rep. Jeffries (NY). We urge you to move this legislation forward through the House as soon as possible.

The demand for rehabilitative programming in the federal prison system far exceeds capacity. For example, approximately 16,000 prisoners are on a waitlist for basic literacy programming. This means incarcerated men and women aren't getting sufficient reentry preparation in prison and as a result, our communities are less safe. Additionally, the federal prison system offers much less opportunity for prisoners to transition to community corrections before the end of their sentence compared to most states. This is due to multiple policies, including having very limited federal prison programs that qualify for "earned time" credit. Currently, only the Residential Drug Abuse Treatment Program enables participants to earn one year off their sentence.

The federal prison system currently holds more than 180,000 incarcerated men and women, making it the largest prison system in the country. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) population exceeds its system capacity by 14 to 25 percent. Limiting the transition time for prisoners to move to community corrections before the end of their sentence exacerbates this overcrowding, making it difficult to run effective programs and to keep prison officials and prisoners safe.

Each year about 40,000 federal prisoners are released, but about half will be arrested again within three years. The revolving door of criminal justice is devastating to families and depresses economic activity in many communities. We owe it to the communities most affected by crime and incarceration to ensure that federal prisoners have the greatest possibility for rehabilitation while in prison and success upon release.

This Prison Reform and Redemption Act aims to improve our prisons' rate of return through the following reforms:

- **Expands Prison Programs and Earned Time Credits Opportunities:** The BOP is required to increase and improve prison programming and productive activities, such as drug rehabilitation, education, skills training, faith-based classes, and work programs, in partnership with non-profit and faith-based organizations. Earned time credit opportunities will be expanded by the Attorney General to include any program found effective for reducing recidivism.

- **Risk Assessment:** The Department of Justice must develop a Post-Sentencing Risk and Needs Assessment System and implement it in all facilities in order to assign the most effective programming to each individual. Prisoners will be periodically reassessed.
- **Provides Incentives for Program Completion:** Increased phone and visitation privileges are available for all prisoners who complete programs. Certain prisoners are eligible to serve the final days of their sentences in halfway houses or home confinement.

Federal prisons should provide opportunities for men and women behind bars to make amends and earn back the public's trust. The regular use of risk assessment, individualized prison program plans, and opportunities for earlier release to community corrections, will be a significant step in transforming the federal prison system. This legislation will allow men and women in our federal prisons to return home sooner and better prepared to give back to their families and communities at their highest potential.

We believe these changes will improve the effectiveness of our prisons and public safety. Nonetheless, our system requires additional changes beyond prison reform. While this step is significant, we hope it is just one of many to come. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to joining you in supporting the passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Aleph Institute  
 Americans for Tax Reform  
 Association of Prosecuting Attorneys  
 Bridges To Life  
 Christian Community Development Association  
 Commonwealth Foundation  
 Correctional Ministries and Chaplains Association  
 Council for Christian Colleges and Universities  
 Douglass Leadership Institute  
 Due Process Institute  
 Faith & Freedom Coalition  
 Florida TaxWatch, Inc.  
 Heritage Action  
 Institute for Prison Ministries  
 James Madison Institute  
 Mississippi Center for Public Policy  
 National Association of Evangelicals  
 National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference  
 Prison Fellowship  
 R Street Institute  
 Rio Grande Foundation  
 Soteria Community Development Association  
 Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission  
 Texas Public Policy Foundation