

June 2, 2015

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Leahy:

We are writing in support of the CORRECTIONS Act (Corrections Oversight, Recidivism Reduction, and Eliminating Costs for Taxpayers In Our National System Act, S. 467), introduced by Senators John Cornyn and Sheldon Whitehouse. We believe this bipartisan effort presents an opportunity to empower federal corrections officials and prisoners to redefine time spent in prison from a period of incapacitation to a crossroads of transformation. This legislation will improve public safety, reduce the federal prison population, and save taxpayer dollars.

The legislation requires the Department of Justice to expand recidivism reduction programming, such as drug rehabilitation, education, skills training, faith-based classes, and work programs, for all federal prisoners in partnership with non-profit and faith-based organizations. The Bureau of Prisons is directed to use risk and needs assessment tools to assign the most effective amount and type of programming to each prisoner and provides incentives for program participation.

All federal prisoners who complete programs are eligible for incentives developed by the Bureau of Prisons, such as increased telephone or visitation privileges. If prisoners reach a moderate or low-risk classification, they may use time credits earned from program completion toward prerelease custody in a residential reentry center, on home confinement, or on community supervision. Additionally, the bill authorizes U.S. Probation to conduct a pilot program in which individuals with substance-abuse issues are subject to high-intensity community supervision, and swift, predictable and graduated sanctions for breaking program rules. The pilot is modeled after the HOPE program in Hawaii, which has been highly successful in curtailing participants' substance abuse.

Since 1980, the federal prison system's population and cost has significantly expanded. In 1980, the federal prison system incarcerated 25,000 people. Today, its population is over 209,000 and prisons operate at 128 percent of capacity. The federal Bureau of Prisons now consumes \$6.85 billion, or roughly one-fourth of the Department of Justice's budget. The CORRECTIONS Act will help address these issues by reducing the prison population and preparing men and women to rejoin society as law-abiding and contributing members of society. Ninety percent of the resulting cost savings will be reinvested toward federal prison programs, prerelease custody, and law enforcement assistance.

As you know, the CORRECTIONS Act is based on legislation that passed with an overwhelming bipartisan vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee last year. We urge you and your colleagues to support the legislation and allow your committee to deliberate and vote on this critical bill as soon as possible. Thank you.

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