SJR102

193179-2

By Senators Ward and Whatley

RFD:

First Read: 13-MAR-18
ENROLLED, SJR102,

RECOGNIZING APRIL 2018 AS SECOND CHANCE MONTH.

WHEREAS, every person is endowed with human dignity and value; and

WHEREAS, redemption and second chances are American values; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 65 million American citizens have a criminal record; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Justice reports that over 620,000 individuals returned to their community from state and federal prisons in 2015; and

WHEREAS, those individuals who have paid their debt after committing a crime face significant barriers, also known as collateral consequences, to reintegrating into society; and

WHEREAS, the Council of State Governments reports that the number of legal collateral consequences of a criminal conviction exceeds 48,000; and

WHEREAS, many of these consequences are mandatory, without taking into account the seriousness of the offense, the time passed since the offense, the individual's efforts to
make amends and earn back the public's trust, or whether the consequence has a proven public safety benefit; and

WHEREAS, gaining meaningful employment is one of the most significant predictors of successful reentry and reducing future criminal activity; and

WHEREAS, ninety percent of those who have previously been incarcerated struggle to find employment because of both societal and legal barriers which are often not directly related to the offense committed or any proven public safety benefit; and

WHEREAS, every jurisdiction has laws which prohibit individuals with a criminal record from working in certain industries, such as cosmetology, operation of arcade games, automotive parts recycling, camping equipment sales, boiler inspection, and many others; and

WHEREAS, over 60 percent of employers report they would not be willing to hire someone with any criminal record and many employers utilize a blanket no-hire policy for individuals with a criminal record; and

WHEREAS, education has also been shown to be a significant predictor of successful reentry; and

WHEREAS, those with a criminal record have lower levels of educational attainment than the general population and have significant difficulty acquiring admission to and funding for educational programs; and
WHEREAS, individuals convicted of certain crimes are barred from receiving the financial aid necessary to acquire additional skills and knowledge; and

WHEREAS, many individuals, regardless of their efforts to live positively, are denied admission to institutions of higher education because of their criminal record, despite a lack of empirical evidence showing a campus safety risk; and

WHEREAS, people with a criminal history also face significant barriers in securing a place to live; and

WHEREAS, fifty-six percent of landlords are unwilling to rent to an individual with a criminal record containing a felony charge and 32 percent are unwilling to rent to an individual with a previous misdemeanor conviction; and

WHEREAS, individuals with criminal history are also barred from seeking access to public housing or receiving public housing assistance; and

WHEREAS, this inability to access housing has been found to increase the number of individuals returning to prison; and

WHEREAS, many people with a criminal history also face other significant challenges such as an inability to regain voting rights, volunteer in their community, and secure
identification documentation, and incur significant debt as a
result of their conviction and incarceration; and

WHEREAS, all of these barriers prevent the 65
million Americans with criminal records from contributing
fully to their families and communities; and

WHEREAS, these barriers can contribute to
recidivism, which increases victimization and decreases public
safety; and

WHEREAS, the inability to find gainful employment
and other collateral consequences of conviction inhibit the
economic mobility of people with criminal history, which
negatively impacts the well-being of their children and
families for generations; and

WHEREAS, the legal barriers and stigma associated
with a criminal record results in lost human capital and lost
economic output for the United States; and

WHEREAS, Charles Colson used his second chance
following his incarceration for a Watergate-related crime to
found Prison Fellowship, the nation's largest outreach to
prisoners and their families; he died on April 21, 2012; and

WHEREAS, a robust coalition of businesses,
congregations, and other organizations across the country has
celebrated Second Chance Month since April 2017 through
events, races, briefings, social media campaigns, advocacy,
press, and other activities; and
WHEREAS, the designation of April as Second Chance Month contributes to increased public awareness about the challenges faced by those who have paid their debt, and opportunities for individuals, employers, congregations, and communities to extend second chances; now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That the State of Alabama recognizes April 2018 as Second Chance Month; honors the work of communities, governmental institutions, nonprofits, congregations, employers, and individuals who strive to remove unnecessary legal and societal barriers that prevent individuals with a criminal record from becoming productive members of society; and calls upon the people of Alabama to observe Second Chance Month through actions and programs that promote awareness of the challenges facing those who have paid their debt and opportunities to unlock a second chance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be sent to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, the United States Attorney General, Governor Kay Ivey, the Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Corrections, and to each member of the Alabama Congressional Delegation.
President and Presiding Officer of the Senate

Speaker of the House of Representatives

SJR102

Senate 13-MAR-18
I hereby certify that the within Senate Joint Resolution originated in and was adopted by the Senate.

Patrick Harris,
Secretary.

House of Representatives
Adopted: 20-MAR-18

By: Senator Ward