

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 5, 2010

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chair, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
144 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
123 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

Please support the President's request of \$100 million for Second Chance Act programs in FY 2011.

In 2008, federal and state prisons held over 1.6 million inmates – one in every 198 U.S. residents – and released 735,000 individuals back to our communities. Unfortunately, most individuals face numerous challenges when returning to the community from prison, and research indicates that more than half return to prison within three years of their release. The Second Chance Act is a common sense, evidence-based approach to improving public safety.

These grants will provide crucial resources at a time when they are desperately needed.

- More than 10,000 individuals are released from Maryland state prisons every year, and more than 5,000 are released from Maryland jails. The average reading level of Maryland inmates is between the sixth and eighth grade level; less than half hold high school degrees or GEDs; and most did not have jobs when they were arrested.
- The Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) releases more than 10,000 prisoners every year. Substance abuse is a key factor in approximately 70 percent of the cases of offenders entering the ADOC. Sixty percent lack a high school diploma. Thirty-five percent of inmates released in 2005 returned to the custody of the ADOC within three years.

The Second Chance Act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law in April 2008, authorizes \$165 million for programs that will improve coordination of reentry services and policies at the state and local levels. Though individuals face many challenges when they return from prison or jail to the community, research confirms that comprehensive, coordinated services can help formerly incarcerated individuals find stable employment and housing, thereby reducing recidivism.

The first class of Second Chance Act grantees demonstrate the innovative and coordinated responses to reducing recidivism that state and local governments and nonprofit organizations are employing nationwide. With the help of the Second Chance Act grants, these efforts are expanding to better address the overwhelming need for services among this population. Among the 67 2009 grantees are:

- The Baltimore City Health Department, which received a Second Chance Act demonstration grant to expand the Violence Prevention Initiative, which targets youth who are at the highest risk of becoming either a victim or perpetrator of violence. Second Chance funds will provide enhanced case management and case planning services to Baltimore youth while they are in placement, as well as increased monitoring, referrals, and support for youth and their families following release. Participants will be required to participate in a juvenile reentry court, where they must appear every month for a case conference.

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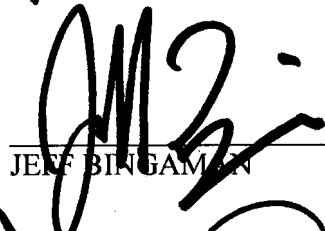
- The Oklahoma Department of Corrections, which received a Second Chance Act demonstration grant to develop a community-based transition facility for men returning to Oklahoma City. The facility will house men assessed as high-risk and high-need for 12 to 18 months prior to release. Services will be provided to address criminogenic needs, including substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, cognitive behavioral intervention, education, life skills, and vocational services.
- The Church United for Community Development in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, which received a Second Chance Act mentoring grant to assist individuals returning to the Baton Rouge area from state and local correctional facilities. In addition to mentoring, participants will receive training in communication skills, anger management, money management, job seeking and retention, and parenting, as well as mental health and substance abuse treatment.

State and local governments and nonprofit organizations around the country are eager to launch innovative reentry programs, and families and communities are desperate to access the services the Second Chance Act will provide. Please support FY 2011 funding for the Second Chance Act.

Sincerely,


PATRICK LEAHY

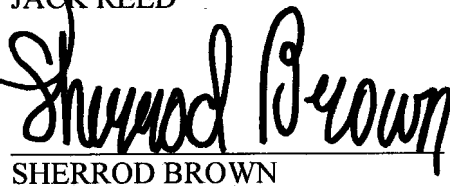

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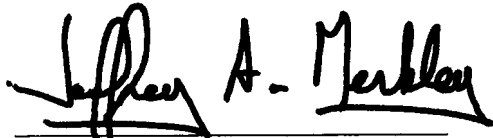

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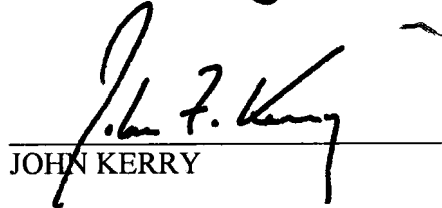

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cc: The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations