



Justice Center
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

May 9, 2018

Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Jerrod Nadler
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Nadler:

I am writing on behalf of the Council of State Governments Justice Center in support of the First Step Act. This bill seeks to reduce recidivism by requiring the Attorney General to develop a risk assessment tool for Bureau of Prisons inmates and expand recidivism reduction programming for them. We support this legislation because it incentivizes programming that will help inmates stay on the right path after they are released from prison. We believe that inmates should have access to evidence-based programs that give them the opportunity to earn time credits and be better-prepared when they are released.

The Council of State Governments Justice Center provides practical, nonpartisan, research-driven strategies and tools to increase public safety and strengthen communities. We provide in-depth data analysis and extensive interviews of people on the front lines, which inform our recommendations to states and counties that are seeking to improve their justice systems. We also conduct original, groundbreaking research that has prompted national initiatives. In addition, we provide training and assistance to state and local agencies informed by the latest research, conduct national and state-level convenings with colleagues from across the country, and organize briefings for members of Congress and other top officials,

Through our work across the country, we have witnessed first-hand the hard work that states and counties undertake, in an effort to improve their justice systems. We know that reforming a prison system is a challenging task, but we also know that this important work must be pursued. There is ample research about the types of programs that reduce recidivism and validated risk assessments tools that can help the Attorney General implement the First Step Act effectively. We wholeheartedly support this effort, and any program, whose goal it is to provide inmates the resources and tools they need to lead a successful life upon release. It is most-effective policy to provide inmates with incentives for their participation, as the First Step Act does, and we support the bill for this reason as well. We cannot understate the significance that transfer to a facility closer to home, earlier transfer into pre-release custody, and increased telephone and visitation



Justice Center

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

privileges for an incarcerated individual. In addition, we support the bill because it amends the Second Chance Act of 2007 to reauthorize and modify the elderly offender program to expand eligibility to more elderly offenders.

We applaud the authors of this bill and are pleased that it represents a bipartisan effort to make much-needed improvements to the prison system. We are hopeful that this bill represents the beginning of continued and greater improvements to the prison system, as the bill title implies. For all of the above reasons, we urge you to support this legislation when it comes before the Judiciary Committee this week.

Sincerely,

Megan Quattlebaum
Director, CSG Justice Center