



**National
Urban League**

*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*

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December 7, 2017

Honorable Robert "Bobby" Scott
1201 Longworth House Office Bldg.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Jason Lewis
418 Cannon House Office Bldg.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Scott and Lewis:

As President and CEO of the National Urban League, and on behalf of its 88 affiliates representing 300 communities in 36 states and the District of Columbia that offer direct services to more than 2 million people to enter the economic and social mainstream, I am writing to express our strong support for the *Safe, Accountable, Fair, and Effective (SAFE) Justice Act (H.R.4261)*. This bipartisan bill takes a comprehensive approach at both the front end and back end of mass incarceration and is grounded in evidence-based lessons learned in the states that have been innovative in reducing incarceration, saving money, and reinvesting in programs to reduce crime and recidivism.

With 2.2 million people in the nation's prisons and jails (a 500% increase over the last 40 years), the United States is the world's leader in incarcerating its people,ⁱ with African Americans bearing a disproportionately high burden of this mass incarceration. According to *The Sentencing Project*, public policies, implicit racial bias, and socioeconomic inequity contribute to racial disparities at every level of the criminal justice system.ⁱⁱ Overall, African Americans are more likely than white Americans to be arrested; once arrested, they are more likely to be convicted; and once convicted, they are more likely to face stiff sentences.ⁱⁱⁱ Upon completion of their sentences, the formerly incarcerated must then overcome "collateral consequences"^{iv} of their past incarceration that include road blocks to accessing employment, education, housing and public benefits.

Drawing on the work of thirty-three (33) states that have reduced crime and saved money while effectively reducing incarceration, the *SAFE Justice Act* provides a comprehensive approach towards reforming our federal criminal justice system by:

- Curtailing overcriminalization;
- Increasing the use of evidence-based sentencing alternatives;
- Concentrating prison space on violent and career criminals;
- Reducing recidivism; and
- Increasing government transparency and accountability.

For its part, the National Urban League has been serving the formerly incarcerated for more than fifty years. Through our signature Adult Re-entry Program, the National Urban League affords enrolled participants the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials, learn employment-focused skills, and form positive relationships with their communities. We offer workforce development, targeted training, mentoring, and support services through the help of our Urban League Affiliates.

The *SAFE Justice Act* offers a strategic path toward protecting public safety and reining in escalating corrections costs. The National Urban League looks forward to working with you to ensure that this bipartisan bill is enacted into law expeditiously.

Sincerely,



Marc H. Morial
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Urban League

ⁱ “Criminal Justice Facts,” The Sentencing Project. Accessed at <http://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} The National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction (NICCC): Accessed at http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/events/criminal_justice/annual14_Barriers_Reentry.authcheckdam.pdf; and www.abacollateralconsequences.org