



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

October 29, 2015

The Honorable Jim Sensenbrenner
Chairman
Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism,
Homeland Security, and Investigations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert "Bobby" Scott
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Sensenbrenner and Representative Scott:

On behalf of the 123,000 members and affiliates of the American Psychological Association (APA), I am writing to express our strong support for the Sensenbrenner-Scott Safe, Accountable, Fair, and Effective Justice Reinvestment (SAFE Justice) Act of 2015, H.R. 2944, and to thank you for your longstanding leadership on federal criminal justice reform. This critical legislation seeks to redress policies associated with high incarceration and recidivism rates, over-criminalization, and public investments that have not brought about anticipated public safety gains.

APA is the largest scientific and professional organization of psychologists in the United States. Comprising researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students, APA works to advance psychology as a science, profession, and means of promoting health, education, and human welfare.

Psychologists address issues fundamental to the goals of the SAFE Justice Act in numerous ways, by: delivering mental and behavioral health services to justice-involved individuals in jails, prisons, and the community; addressing criminogenic risk factors through research and the development and evaluation of assessment and treatment; creating and evaluating programs to address the needs of specific populations, such as pregnant offenders and the families of incarcerated offenders; operating and disseminating de-escalation training and Crisis Intervention Team approaches to addressing mental health crises; and others.

We are very grateful for your commitment to over-criminalization, sentencing, and corrections reform, and the SAFE Justice Act stands as the product of years' worth of careful fact-finding, deliberation, and bipartisan cooperation. Your critical efforts as co-chairs of the Over-criminalization Task Force laid the groundwork for this ambitious legislation. H.R. 2944 seeks to make immediate investments in correcting serious flaws in the federal criminal justice system. APA particularly appreciates SAFE Justice Act provisions that:

- Support the use of well-established behavioral and forensic science, to help ensure a most basic human right: the freedom of individuals guilty of no wrongdoing;

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- Address mental and behavioral health needs of individuals under correctional control;
- Reform federal mandatory minimum sentences, which have resulted in unnecessary harm to too many individuals, families, and communities;
- Broaden the safety valve, including a critical provision allowing judges discretion over sentencing when an offense directly relates to an offender's mental health problems, addiction, trauma, or victimization history; and
- Provide incentives to offenders and the courts that would result in reduced recidivism.

APA is also very grateful for language in the bill that would improve law enforcement safety and police-community relations.

Once more, thank you for your strong leadership on criminal justice issues, and we urge you to continue to pursue the strongest possible reform package that includes provisions unique to H.R. 2944. If our association can be of support in your efforts, please contact Micah Haskell-Hoehl in the Public Interest Government Relations Office at mhaskell-hoehl@apa.org or 202.336.5935. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Keita".

Gwendolyn Puryear Keita, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Public Interest Directorate

Cc: Members, House Committee on the Judiciary