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ABA DAY IN WASHINGTON  
PLANNING COMMITTEE

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April 29, 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

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Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

I write on behalf of the American Bar Association to urge you to support funding for FY 2011 for the Second Chance Act. The Second Chance Act, which passed with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law in April 2008, is a common-sense, evidence-based approach to reducing crime and improving public safety. It authorizes \$165 million for each of two years, providing a critical opportunity for a modest investment in “back-end” crime prevention that represents a tiny fraction of federal spending on the criminal justice system. The ABA believes it is imperative that we take advantage of this opportunity by fully funding the Act.

The Act authorizes \$165 million for programs that will improve coordination of reentry services and policies at the state and local levels. The Second Chance Act includes a \$55 million program for State and Local Reentry Demonstration Projects that improve coordination of reentry initiatives and implement evidence-based practices. The Second Chance Act also authorizes a \$15 million program for Mentoring Grants to Nonprofit Organizations that provide mentoring and other transitional services to adults and youth returning from correctional facilities.

The Second Chance Act will provide crucial resources at a time when they are desperately needed. 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 their communities. And more than 9 million individuals are released from jail each year. Unfortunately, most individuals face numerous challenges when returning to the community from prison or jail,

and research indicates that over half are reincarcerated within three years of their release. In a recent report, The Pew Charitable Trusts estimated that, if current growth rates continue, state and federal prisons will grow by 13 percent by 2013, adding more than 192,000 prisoners at a cost of \$27.5 billion. According to the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, jails are growing at an even faster pace. However, research confirms that comprehensive, coordinated services can help formerly incarcerated individuals find stable employment and housing, thereby reducing recidivism.

By establishing programs to provide the resources needed to coordinate reentry services and policies at the state and local level, the Second Chance Act ensures that the tax dollars spent on corrections will not simply fuel a revolving door in and out of prison and jail. State, tribal and local governments and nonprofit organizations around the country are eager to launch and expand innovative reentry programs, and families and communities are desperate to access the services the Second Chance Act will provide. We urge the Subcommittee to approve the full authorized funding of \$165 million for FY 2011 for the Second Chance Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas M. Susman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas M. Susman

cc: Members of the Subcommittee